JAPANESE PLAYS
AND PLAYFELLOWS





# JAPANESE PLAYS AND PLAYFELLOWS

BY

OSMAN EDWARDS

WITH TWELVE COLOURED PLATES BY JAPANESE ARTISTS





LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1901

TO

YAKUMO KOIZUMI

AND

LAFCADIO HEARN

POET AND FRIEND

WITH

ADMIRING GRATITUDE

# PREFACE

*I do not pretend to compete in the crowded field of Japanese sociology with those who have lived more than six months or less than six weeks in the country. My own stay was limited to half a year. I had, of course, studied the language with native teachers and devoured the records of foreign travellers. I concluded that theatrical matters had been less fully described than any other: to them, accordingly, I devoted most attention. But there were other themes on which I had been insufficiently informed. Impersonal essays are, therefore, supplemented by personal reminiscences, for which I claim indulgence. If the first now seem to me too short, the second may seem to others too long. Yet I have tried only to select incidents and characteristics which differ strikingly from Western ways.*

*Austere critics will assuredly resent the excess of incense burned in these pages in honour of the* musumé. *But, whether she and they like it or not, she continues to summarise in her dainty little person much of her country's magic: its picturesqueness, its kindness, its politeness. On certain symptoms of anti-foreign feeling I have dwelt at some length, because the obvious witchery of Japan so often results in the suppression of unpleasant*

*testimony by those whose own souvenirs are pleasantness itself. There is certainly no reason why the Japanese should exhibit more altruism to other nations than is exhibited in the reverse case. The apprehensions expressed by such an admirer of the race as Mr. A. B. Mitford, in a recent letter to the* Times *as to the expediency of giving them too free a hand in the solution of the Chinese problem, however unwelcome to advocates of an Anglo-Japanese alliance, deserve to be well weighed. Neither pro-Japanese tourist nor anti-Japanese resident can refuse admiration to the courage and cleverness of those Happy Islanders, whose foreign policy is better left to impartial pens for judgment. A partial spectator, I can only render appreciative thanks for what I have seen and loved.*

*I desire to acknowledge indebtedness to Mr. B. H. Chamberlain and Mr. G. W. Aston for much information as to lore and literature; to the anonymous author of a pamphlet entitled "Notes on the History of the Yoshiwara of Yedo"; to Mr. Fenollosa, Mr. Fukuchi, Mr. Fukai, Mr. K. Hirata, and Mr. Isoh Yamagata for opportunities and courtesies; to the editors of the* Hansei Zasshi, The Sketch, *and* The Studio *for permission to make use of material contributed to their columns.*

*WESTENDE-LES-BAINS.*

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# BEHIND THE SCENES

## BEHIND THE SCENES

A FOREIGN country for most travellers is very like a theatre. They arrive in holiday mood, resolving to be pleased, since otherwise their judgment in choosing that country rather than another, their faculty of appreciating what so many have proclaimed delectable, might seem at fault. Should their choice have fallen on Japan, be sure that eulogistic notices from the pens of Sir Edwin Arnold and M. Pierre Loti have prepared them to enjoy the daintiest of comediettas. They reach the enchanted shore. They pass swiftly from one aspect of fairyland to another. Nothing happens to shake their preconceived conviction that in the Land of the Rising Sun Nature began and Art completed a yellow paradise. They do not heed the jeremiads of resident aliens, nor the bitter cry of outcast professors, who gather thorns where the tourist is dazzled by cherry-blossom. The picturesque unreality of common things abets illusion. Surely these dolls' houses of wood and paper, these canopies of rosy bloom and curtains of purple wistaria, the gigantic cryptomeria, the tentacular pines, the azure inland sea and snow-streaked Fuji itself—surely all these compose a superb *mise en scène* for poetic

comedy! And when "the crowd" enters, a smiling crowd of straw-sandalled rickshaw-runners, of kneeling tea-house girls, and shaven babies, arrayed like bright-winged butterflies, churlish indeed were the spectator who should refuse to smile back and cheer with the best. Then consider the privileges which he may enjoy in that admirably arranged theatre. Were he in his own country, the footlights divide him for a few hours at most from actors whose privacy, however coveted, he may seldom hope to invade. But on Japanese soil he may often obtain, by fee or favour, like the stage-struck noble of Molière's and Shakespeare's time, familiar acquaintance with performance and performers. The latter are, on the stage, his puppets; off the stage, his friends. Indeed, he confounds the two, and ends by treating them with affectionate condescension. This attitude, which he half-involuntarily assumes from an ever-present consciousness of superior civilisation (as he considers it), deceives only himself. The polite but thoughtful patriot, perceiving that his temples are regarded as bric-à-brac, his race as a race of ingenious marionettes, protests in vain against the unwelcome flattery of surprised admirers. "To this kind of people," wrote Mr. Fukai, one of the ablest journalists in Tōkyō, "our country is simply a play-ground for globe-trotters, our people a band of cheerful, merry playfellows. Painstaking inquiries are made about Japanese curios and objects of art—sometimes important, no doubt, but sometimes ridiculously trivial—while the investigation of such subjects as the ethical life, the social and political institutions, are far too much neglected. The history of the nation is ignored, and our recent progress is supposed to be

wholly owing to a miraculous touch of Western civilisation." But who is to remedy this unfortunate susceptibility on the part of foreigners? The foreign *employé* has his work to do—diplomatic, professional, or commercial; the native is in no particular hurry to court the esteem of outsiders, being quite contented with his own high estimate of himself. Must it always be an officer "on short leave," or a journalist in a hurry, who undertakes to record superficial impressions of a passing spectacle? At least, it is no use reporting from the stalls what the casual playgoer imagines he has seen, unless his report be confirmed and controlled by those who move in the mysterious world "behind the scenes," where the drama of popular existence is more adequately observed and to a great extent directed. Happily, the judicious inquirer has only to choose between competent guides, whose eyes are no longer confused by the glimmer of dancing lanterns. Let us pass behind the scenes, and discover, if we can, what sort of piece is being rehearsed—what mode of action the performers affect. If we lose some illusions, we may gain a profitable glimpse of decorously veiled truths.

The foreign resident is rarely cast for an important part, never for a permanent one. It is notorious that he lacks æsthetic charm. His wife and children, his club and counting-house, his racecourse and cricket-field, are standing tokens of unassimilative exile. In England he would be a good citizen and an excellent fellow, sure of his seat on the School Board or County Council, if not in Parliament, supposing that his ambitions included that of service to the community. But in Kōbe or Yokohama he lives as isolated from the fascinating "native-born" as any Jew in a

mediæval ghetto. And he does not feel the spell which takes the bookmaker captive. It will not do to dismiss him as a Philistine, a coarse barbarian, whose only aim is to exploit the country for his own benefit, since, on closer acquaintance, you find him, more often than not, cultured, kindly, and just. What, then, can be the cause of his extraordinary antipathy to the land, ideally perfect as it appears to us, in which his lines are cast? For every blessing you pronounce he replies with a malediction, and, since his life behind the scenes is at least nearer actuality than your own, you borrow his eyes, with which the better to contemplate a Japanese Janus, whose smiling visage fills you with delight, though at him is levelled a forbidding frown.

The root of his discomfort and your enchantment is a profoundly narrow patriotism. Viewed from without, this brave and alert nation, courteous to strangers and glad to excite admiration, retaining so much that is picturesque and unique, yet capable of appropriating the external panoply of Western civilisation, might seem more companionable than any other; viewed from within, it is evidently a close corporation, intolerant of rivalry, diligent to protect itself, and determined to restrict at all costs "Japan to the Japanese." It is futile to blame this trait, which springs inevitably from the forced seclusion of two centuries, during which period the barbarian was rigorously excluded until he obtained readmission at the cannon's mouth. Nor is such hostile feeling confined to the ignorant. On the contrary, the farther you go from the great centres, where the mixture of races might be expected to produce a better mutual understanding, the more amiable is your reception. The mercantile classes

dread and dislike the invading trader, while imitating his methods, so far as they can grasp them, with the intention of ousting him as much as possible from their markets. Even the intellectual classes, quick to appreciate the value of Western science, arms, and government, are none the nearer spiritually through their acquisition. Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, whose passionate devotion to his adopted country has inspired many pæans of tender praise, yet writes: "Between the most elevated class of thoroughly modernised Japanese and the Western thinker anything akin to intellectual sympathy is non-existent: it is replaced on the native side by a cold and faultless politeness. Finally, a Tōkyō critic, whose language is as vigorous as his disillusion is genuine, complains thus bitterly in *The Orient* (April 1899) of "The Rest of the World":

"From first to last our foreign records have shown almost insatiable greed on the part of our treaty-allies. We have, it is true, asked for no favours; and it is equally certain that we have not received any. There never has been any real feeling of fraternal amity between us and our allies; and this not because we were not willing, indeed eager, to take the initiative, but because our treaty-allies have held superciliously aloof and grudged us an entrance into the comity of nations. All things considered, we do not find the debt of gratitude we owe to foreign lands beyond power of bearing. Civilisation? We had that before ever Commodore Perry came to Uraga and Mississippi Bay. Schools? Well, text-books are to be bought in the open market, and our students have always paid their way at Western universities. Railways? Yes, but look at the absurd price we had to pay for

the first line between Tōkyō and Yokohama! And so on with the whole list. We have paid the highest market price for our experience, with a thumping big commission for the privilege of buying it even at that rate. Yes, we have profited, but largely lost our own self-respect in the profiting."

Innocently unaware of storms in the beautiful Satsuma tea-pot, the globe-trotter goes his way, playing and paying to the satisfaction of all. But the business man, whose presence is an affront and not a compliment, has to bear the brunt of them. The difficulties which beset his calling are not to be paralleled elsewhere. There was a time when the native merchant would try to intimidate his rival into concluding a bargain by employing *sōshi*, importunate bravoes, to lay siege at all hours to the private and official door of their victim, until he capitulated or demanded police protection. But this somewhat *naïf* procedure did not command general approval. More easy and more usual is the device of ordering goods and refusing to take delivery except at a much reduced rate. The perpetually quoted case of Cornes *v.* Kimura (Yokohama, 1894), which the reader will find described at length in Mr. Chamberlain's "Things Japanese" (under the heading "Trade"), is more eloquent than pages of second-hand rhetoric. Briefly, the British importer, in spite of a verdict given in his favour by a Japanese judge, was compelled to retain some of the ordered goods, at a loss of 2500 *yen*, on pain of being boycotted by the Yarn Traders' Guild. If this case stood alone, one would be loath to revive recollection of it, but there remains so many a slip between the signing of similar contracts and their fulfilments, that the warehouses at the treaty-ports are never without

incriminating bales, which lower Japanese credit and testify to the slow growth of commercial honesty. To eliminate the foreign importer altogether is, of course, better than to boycott him, and this, with Government aid, is gradually being accomplished. First, a law was passed that Government contracts for plant and material were to be given only to Japanese subjects. Then, when it was found that a foreign firm would try to evade this by employing a Japanese man of straw, an enactment was issued for the re-inspection of all plant on arrival in Japan. Mr. Stafford Ransome, in an article contributed to *The Engineer* on the subject of this official re-inspection, quotes the case of 16,000 tons of cast-iron pipes supplied by one Belgian and two British firms for the Tōkyō waterworks. Of the 10,000 tons of Belgian pipes only 2700 were accepted, and of the English 4000 out of 6000 tons. Yet in his opinion the rejected pipes were perfectly good for the purpose. That experience will correct short-sighted dishonesty, that the native merchant will gradually master the principles of international trade and become as respected as he was in feudal days despised, nobody doubts; and if for the moment the stranger within his gates must suffer, the gates are not yet stripped of all their gold. Already the Chambers of Commerce have realised that capital is cosmopolitan, and that excess of chauvinism spells bankruptcy for local enterprise. So long as the laws forbid the foreigner to own land, to hold shares in native companies or to assist in their management, he is naturally shy of responding to invitations to invest. But at first such invitations were not frequent. Ten years ago the craze for joint-stock companies, though widespread, was yet hedged

in by patriotic precaution. The promoters had no desire to share with outsiders the golden fruit which seemed to beckon from speculative boughs. Moreover, the Government, always paternal from sentiment and tradition, would often pledge its support in liberal subsidies. The defeat of China redoubled the victor's confidence in his capacity to develop his own possessions with his own resources. But events have not kept pace with his hopes. The greater portion of the indemnity was diverted, after all, into British pockets in return for unproductive ironclads: prices went up, dividends went down; the shining fruit was turned to ashes through inexpert gardening, for the art of industrial horticulture is not to be learned in a day, especially by amateurs, who sometimes drew an erratic line between private and public consumption of the crop. Whatever the causes, those very Chambers of Commerce, which had strongly opposed the introduction of foreign capital, passed in 1898–99 one resolution after another to the effect that aliens be permitted and solicited to contribute where the funds of indigenous subscribers required to be supplemented. It does not, however, seem probable that foreign investors will be in any hurry to unloose their purse-strings, unless and until the over-cautious patriot can be persuaded to modify the laws in such a way as will give his coadjutor the right to share in the management and responsibility of any scheme towards the success of which his money may be largely, even preponderantly, instrumental.

It must not be supposed that apprehension and mistrust are monopolised by one party to this subterranean war. For five years it has been impossible to open an English journal published in the treaty-

ports without finding in it some dismal prophecy of the time (it began on June 18, 1899) when the treaties concluded by Lord Rosebery's Government should be put into operation, when the walls of the ghetto should be razed, when the British lion and the Japanese lamb must lie down together in unity. The right to travel in the interior without passports, and to reside in any district whatsoever without special permission, are the only advantages conferred by the treaties on resident aliens — advantages which he would enjoy as a matter of course in any civilised country. The disadvantages, of which he fears the inconvenience, to use no stronger term, are numerous. Extra-territoriality being abolished, he becomes subject to Japanese law, which is incompletely codified and must be administered by men whose patriotic bias and sense of justice may be subjected at times to a severe strain. Still, the right to exercise jurisdiction on all within her borders cannot be refused, without insult, to a civilised Power. The right to impose duty on imports (hitherto limited to five per cent.) up to thirty or forty per cent. is not only undeniable, but absolutely desirable in the interests of Japanese trade. It is suggested, however, that such high duties might be levied on objects which are indispensable to foreigners and of little utility to natives, as to form a lever for the gradual ejection of aliens. There is no guarantee that the freedom of the Press and the freedom of public meeting will be exempt from those restrictions, which are daily and legally imposed on the Japanese themselves. The coasting trade, the right of doctors and lawyers to practise without a Japanese diploma, the conditions of holding and selling leases — on these most vital points the utmost uncertainty exists.

No wonder that Mr. B. H. Chamberlain asked, "Could any one imagine such terms having ever been agreed to except as the result of a disastrous war?"

Happily, between the discontented British and the ultra-patriotic Japanese lies a barrier of prudent statesmanship, which has proved itself equal to solving harder problems than any with which the Western world is confronted. No other Eastern nation has known how to transform its polity in accordance with Occidental ideas without provoking internal disruption or external conquest. It is not yet realised that the credit of the achievement is due to a very small band of men—to the Marquess Ito and his associates on the one hand and the foreign instructors on the other, whose names are too soon forgotten, while their works live after them. Though all their compatriots now reap in advancing prestige and prosperity the benefits of the work performed by the "Clan Statesmen," it must not be forgotten that much of that work was accomplished in the face of every obstacle which prejudice and short-sightedness could interpose. Popular dissatisfaction was adroitly diverted by declaring war on China at the moment when factious opposition was bringing discredit on the four-years-old parliamentary Government, and Ministers were strong enough to hold an indignant nation in hand when the fruits of war were so unscrupulously torn from their grasp by Muscovite intrigue. Indications are not wanting that the spirit of tactful sense which has steered Japan through so many tempests is competent to allay those prognosticated by the Cassandras of Kōbe and Yokohama. Those journalistic beldames, who predicted sickness and death for the European inmate of a Japanese prison unless

he should be granted a special diet and a particular *régime*, have been already conciliated by the construction of an expensive gaol, which it is hoped they will never be called upon to occupy. This building, situated at Sugamo, covers an area of about 28,000 square yards. It is provided with tables and chairs, and the cells will be lighted with electricity. Thus the grievance is redressed before it can even occur; murder is averted; *ab uno disce omnes.*

Before dismissing from consideration the prevalent hostility to foreign residents, more noticeable in the ports than elsewhere, and most pronounced in relation to mercantile rivals, a word should be said as to its effects on mission work. Between 1878 and 1888 Christianity appeared to be carrying all before it. The land was honeycombed with evangelists of every sect, from the resplendent deacons of the Orthodox Russian cathedral, which so insolently dominates the capital from the summit of Suruga-dai, to the dingy crowd of Methodists, Baptists, Unitarians, Universalists, and others, none of whom were without a hopeful following of more or less sincere converts. In fact, so fashionable did the once-persecuted faith become that Mr. Fukuzawa, "the Jowett of Japan," the intellectual father of her most progressive pioneers, advocated for a time that it should be adopted as the national religion, by no means on account of its intrinsic merits, but rather as a certificate of spiritual respectability and a passport to more intimate relationship with the Powers which call themselves Christian. This success is easily explained. Not only were many of the missionaries men of high principle and attractive personality, but they had the wisdom to minimise doctrinal differences and the opportunity of

conferring no small material benefit on their disciples by teaching them the English tongue. The commercial value of an English education stood high, and the army of native Christians had a better chance than most of obtaining posts in governmental or other offices. I may mention in passing that the first professed Christian to hold ministerial rank was the Minister of Education in the short-lived Okuma-Itagaki Government of 1898.

Of course, I would not insinuate that cases of genuine conversion were not numerous and productive of moral regeneration, or that the creed of Christendom has failed to strike root among the simple and warm-hearted peasantry. But it is certain that among the educated classes it is now viewed with rationalistic indifference.

Mr. G. W. Aston, towards the close of his "History of Japanese Literature," makes a very significant admission:

"The process of absorbing new ideas, which has mainly occupied the Japanese nation during the last thirty years, is incomplete in one very important particular. Although much in European thought which is inseparable from Christianity has been freely adopted by Japan, the Christian religion itself has made comparatively little progress. The writings of the Kamakura and two subsequent periods are penetrated with Buddhism, and those of the Yedo age with moral and religious ideas derived from China. Christianity has still to put its stamp on the literature of the Tōkyō period."

Whether this apathy towards Christian teaching should be attributed, as some aver, to an incapacity for abstract speculation, or, as others assert, to the



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revolution which its adoption would entail in the position of women, need not be discussed at present. Let the following facts speak for themselves. The latest available statistics show that the number of converts is decreasing. Even within the ranks of Japanese Christianity is a strongly marked tendency to replace foreign by native teachers, and to nationalise that religion by robbing it of many dogmas which are elsewhere regarded as essential. The case of the Dōshisha, which has been of late years a burning question among Japanese and American Christians, is one with which all who take an interest in mission work should certainly be well acquainted, for it furnishes a striking illustration of the appropriative and, to our ideas, somewhat unscrupulous proclivities of Nipponean patriots. The Dōshisha is a Christian university founded at Kyōto in 1875 under the auspices of the American Board Mission. So liberal were the contributions of foreign believers to this very flourishing institution, that at last it came to include, besides a special theological department, a girls' school, a science school, a hospital, and a nurses' training school. Needless to say, the Presbyterian donors inserted a clause in the constitution to the effect that their form of faith should be perpetually and obligatorily taught. Religious schools, however, cannot claim the same privileges as civil schools from the Home Department, which, on the plea of neutrality, only grants to undenominational ones special concessions with regard to military conscription. Realising that this disability acted unfavourably on the number of pupils and retarded the expansion of their work, the governing body of the Dōshisha proceeded to increase the number of native subscribers,

and with their connivance to dechristianise the college, in order to escape the disadvantage already mentioned. That is, the Christian instruction was made optional instead of obligatory, but the buildings and appliances, bought with American money, were of course retained. The Board, representing the original subscribers, protested against what they did not hesitate to characterise as a flagrant breach of faith: the governing body pleaded expediency, and were prepared to redefine Christianity in accordance with their own conceptions of an undeniably vague term. There the matter rests. It might seem unfair to lay stress on this matter, were it not that this action of the Dōshisha authorities is typical of the attitude of native educationalists at the present time to foreign teaching: it forms, in fact, part of the patriotic movement, which I desire to indicate without praise or blame, more especially as that movement is so little known outside Japan. Of course, there has been for years a very natural and proper tendency to replace foreign by native officials as soon as the latter seemed capable of discharging the functions primarily entrusted to the former. But this is very different from denying to foreigners the right of founding schools at their own risk—a right which they would enjoy as a matter of course in any but reactionary States. Such, however, is the policy urged on the Government by the Higher Educational Council (composed of professors in the chief schools and colleges), which on April 17, 1899, passed the following resolution:

"Foreigners who are not conversant with Japanese shall not be allowed to become teachers in other courses than those of foreign languages or special courses in special schools and of schools exclusively intended for

foreigners. *Foreigners who are licensed as teachers in the above-mentioned capacities shall not be allowed to found schools other than those exclusively intended for foreigners.*"

As the founder of a school should legally be a licensed teacher, the foregoing clauses practically prohibit foreigners from establishing schools for Japanese. Besides, there is a clause prohibiting religious education and ceremonies in privileged schools. In other words, the nationalists wish education to be not only in their own hands, but also entirely secular; and those who desire to introduce from abroad theological tenets may no longer do so, if the Government should follow this advice, except from the pulpit or as private individuals. Whether such a restriction be or be not in violation of existing treaties with foreign Powers, I cannot say.

Sufficient proof has perhaps been already adduced of anti-foreign feeling to convince an impartial reader that an Anglo-Saxon exile has some reason for feeling ill at ease in the tourists' paradise. It might be added, however, that even the victim of patriotic manœuvres is hardly ever exposed to personal malevolence. The politest nation in the world would certainly not be guilty of any overt discourtesy. The accident of foreign birth may place you outside the pale of those secure and intimate relations which you might form with colleagues in other lands (the divergence of social and domestic habits by itself almost necessitates this), but, if the collision of financial interests should result in your ejection from a post of vantage, you cannot justly blame an individual, only those centripetal forces that give solidarity and cohesion to a race which remains, the more it changes, the more indissolubly

the same. And though the patriot might think, he would never say to your face, "L'étranger, voilà l'ennemi." On the contrary, if he had not the racial interest to consider, if he were not born in a maze of reciprocal duties which to us are inconceivable, so charming is his natural disposition that I am not a all sure that he would not, now and then, sacrifice himself to oblige an alien!

I have used the phrase "charming natural disposition" deliberately, though it may seem incongruous, or even incompatible with dislike of strangers. What traveller has not felt and described this charm? Will Adams in the beginning of the seventeenth century found "the people of this Iland good of nature, curteous aboue measure," and Sir Rutherford Alcock in the middle of the nineteenth reports them "as kindly and well-disposed people as any in the world." Has their nature, then, suffered any deterioration? Has contact with Europeans and Americans brought material gain at the cost of ethical loss? Many observers, both native and foreign, declare this to be the case: a little reflection will show that it cannot, for the present, be otherwise.

"Old Japan," in the opinion of Mr. Lafcadio Hearn, "was quite as much in advance of the nineteenth century morally as she was behind materially. She had made morality instinctive." This verdict is not yet of purely historic interest; it may be tested by all who care to travel beyond the radius of photographs and railways. In remote districts, where the innkeeper charges a minimum price, relying for profit on the generosity of his guest, whose present is acknowledged by the bestowal of a fan or an embroidered towel, even such fugitive relations rest on a benevolent rather than

a wholly commercial basis. Patriarchal manners—contented submission, fidelity, courtesy—yield a rich return of domestic happiness. The struggle for life and for wealth is tempered by self-sacrificing customs and amenities. ¶ If the apprentice be willing to work for no other wage than his master's approval and satisfaction through long probationary years, the master, on his side, will resign his charge into the hands of a younger generation before decrepitude has come to rob "honourable retirement" of its grace. If the young wife devote her summer to unquestioning service of her husband and his parents, she has her reward when her sons' wives repay her with the same filial homage. Similar ties, imposing restraint on egoism and sanctified by public esteem, have had their full share in developing those amiable qualities which every observer has acknowledged. But the break-up of feudal society cannot fail to react on the manners which reflected feudal discipline. The Western ideals of liberty, equality, and self-assertion, the decay of religious belief, the necessity of fighting on even terms in the great competitive *mêlée* to the tune of "The devil take the hindmost, oh!" and, it must be added, the example set by the rest of the world, which does not practise altruism, whatever its representatives may preach, all these factors tend to harden and sharpen the modernised Japanese.

A curious sign of the independent spirit, nourished on new ideas and strangely at variance with the old, is the organised indiscipline of schoolboys. During the six months which the writer spent in the country two flagrant cases occurred of defiance of authority, by no means unusual, it would appear, in scholastic experience, if one might judge by the comments of the local Press.

In one case the majority of the scholars absented themselves for a fortnight as a protest against the alleged incapacity of the teacher, and maltreated a more docile minority who endeavoured to resume their lessons. In another the upper forms refused to recognise the authority of a headmaster appointed by the Government, on the ground that his talents and attainments fell below the standard which they deemed desirable in the director of their studies. In consequence, the unfortunate nominee of the Minister of Education was completely boycotted; his class-room was deserted, his suggestions ignored; and, on the occasion of the annual prize-giving, he was publicly insulted, for, whereas the whole school rose and remained standing as a mark of respect during the speeches of distinguished visitors, when their unfortunate chief began his address they resumed their seats and engaged in loud conversation, after the manner of our own House of Commons when the suppression of an unwelcome orator is desired. The most surprising feature in both these instances was that a section of the Japanese Press, instead of regarding the incidents as deplorable, indeed, but as domestic matters, which it concerned only the governing body to regulate, made them the subject of a long polemic, sided with or against the malcontents, and, in short, exalted the revolting schoolboys into fellow-citizens "rightly struggling to be free." The college Hampden does not shrink from his *rôle*, and is prepared in the interests of curiosity and "the higher education" to cross-examine a newly-appointed professor, insufficiently protected by a Harvard or Oxford reputation, on his knowledge of Shakespeare, his theological beliefs, his preference for "the open door" or the

gradual partition of China. If this precocious independence conflict with our old-fashioned notions of modesty and reverence on the part of adolescence towards its seniors, it should make life more amusing for the professor, who, after all, is better off with inquisitive than with incurious pupils. I am confirmed in my supposition that the autonomous schoolboy is not at all abnormal by a schoolmaster of nearly ten years' standing, who writes: "In the Occident the master expels the pupil. In Japan it happens quite as often that the pupil expels the master. Each public school is an earnest, spirited little republic." One thing is certain. The taught are as eager to absorb knowledge as the teacher to impart it; idleness is rare; without extraordinary application but little progress can be made. For it should not be forgotten that four or five years must be devoted to the sole acquisition of a working stock of Chinese ideographs, the scholar's needlessly complicated alphabet, before he attacks Western science, law, language, or medicine, themselves supplementary to subjects of native growth. Demands so various can only be met by the most systematic precision, and in effect no country has more carefully organised popular education. To organise comes naturally to the Japanese, and this capacity explains the apparent contradiction of co-existent order and revolt. The revolt is always corporate, one organisation within another. Whether the disaffected body consist of waiters, or workmen, or schoolboys, it has to be treated as a collective unit. The objects pursued —higher wages, more liberty, more privileges—may bear the impress of democratic ambition, but the spirit in which they are fought for is that of feudal obedience to a common call.

It cannot be said that the Japanese Press has degenerated through contact with foreigners, since it is a plant, imported from abroad nearly thirty years ago, which has thriven and multiplied exceedingly on favourable soil. As might have been expected, no modern novelty is more popular than the newspaper in a land where gossip and laughter and criticism are as the breath of life to a sharp-witted, good-tempered race. More than a thousand newspapers—several illustrated, some wholly or partly in English—cater at very low prices to the public appetite. It is natural that the right to speak and print freely should be liable to abuse when first exercised. Nor could the wary group of reformers, whose task of nursing democratic institutions among hereditary partisans of a rigid caste system was no less delicate than difficult, be blamed for setting legal limits to editorial indiscretion. In India and in Egypt the British authorities are often compelled for reasons of State to quench the sacred torch of incendiary invective. But as public opinion grows better educated, it is less liable to be led astray by journalistic tirades. Moreover, the journalist soon acquires a hold, direct or indirect, on the Legislature, wherever Parliament and Press become interdependent. The Press laws of Japan have, in consequence, lost much of their severity, and the "prison-editor" (whose position corresponds to that of the *Sitz-Redaktör* in Prussia) finds his fate of vicarious imprisonment, when the actual editor sins, grow daily less onerous. It was, indeed, urged as a reproach by opposition sheets against the Okuma-Itagaki Ministry of 1898 that five or six of the Ministers had been at some time or other inmates of his Imperial Majesty's gaols; but the gravity of

the reproach is much diminished by the explanation that in nearly every case incarceration had been inflicted for unguarded liberty of expression in the Press or on the platform. Political offences, all the world over, are merely political offences. For the Irish Nationalist Kilmainham is more sacred than Westminster. Such prisoners are no more than naughty children, locked in a dark room by a paternal Government.

But, in truth, it is not the political columns which have most influence on the circulation of Tōkyō journals. If the typical leading article seem to English taste wanting in force and directness, abounding in vague sonorities, that is a fault shared by European editors, who are bound to veil an oracle with traditional obscurity. This trait is, of course, intensified by the impersonal periphrases of the language. Where the director of the journal is most to blame is in allowing his organ to become the medium of worse than American personalities. The newspaper which enjoys the largest circulation among the middle and lower classes of the capital devotes much attention to maintaining the prestige of its *chronique scandaleuse*. The Prime Minister, the foreign merchant or professor, the Buddhist high-priest, will discover that his amours, embellished with corroborative detail and treated with more regard to artistic effect than the facts warrant, command the most flattering and embarrassing popularity. What would be thought of a London newspaper which should record so minutely the movements of a visiting prince as to chronicle the names of professional beauties visited by him, as well as the price paid for their transitory favours? The aggrieved hero or villain has no doubt legal remedy, should he choose

to prosecute the offending reporter; but the remedy would be worse than the disease, since not only is it dilatory and expensive, but the protracted advertisement would tend to circulate rather than to kill the slander. Besides, in the eyes of an indulgent public gallantry, as our French neighbours call it, excites more amusement then reprobation. At any rate, libellous paragraphs, with their inevitable accompaniment of blackmail, are at present sufficiently numerous to detract from the high reputation deservedly enjoyed by more scrupulous journals such as the *Nihon*, the *Nichi Nichi*, and the *Jiji Shimpo*. The *feuilleton* flourishes. When illustrated by woodcuts, representing a Japanese woman tied naked to a tree and assaulted by Russian sailors, it makes good fuel for chauvinistic flame; but such outrages on taste are rare, and in general the reader prefers adventurous romance, with a spice of unreality, in the vein of Jules Verne or the elder Dumas.

Proximity to the continent where manners count for less than dollars has, in the opinion of many, made the present generation less polite and more mercenary than its predecessors. One certainly misses the exquisite courtesy still in vogue in outlying districts, when one has occasion to remark the rudeness or familiarity of certain classes in or near Tōkyō. But this declining courtesy, which cannot be called general, is not to be attributed solely to ignorant dislike of strangers. As soon as the sensitive native discovers that ceremonious attention is apt to be mistaken for obsequiousness, his pride intervenes and his bearing becomes less affable. The example of ill-mannered tourists has, it is true, demoralised the service of certain hotels, where the visitor persists in regarding

the attendant *musumé* as a plaything, but the incivility of the rickshaw-man when his invariable attempt to overcharge is frustrated rests on no other basis than the presumption, not confined to one country, that since the traveller has arrived to spend money, he should be encouraged to spend it as freely as possible. Sometimes, too, an amusing reciprocal patronage is to be observed. If the tourist be inclined to regard the peasant as a living toy invented for his diversion, the peasant not infrequently will see in the tourist a helpless, rather childish creature, pleased by infantile things and unable to speak a word of Japanese. He therefore pities, protects, and fleeces him. None but the incapable rich, whom vanity or idleness compels to become dependent on inferiors, should dream of employing a professional guide. He probably is less well informed than "Murray"; he seeks on every pretext to prolong his services; he exacts a commission on every purchase made, both from his employer and the shopkeeper, for if the latter refuse he will conduct the customer elsewhere. Notwithstanding these peculiarities, he is perhaps worth his price to hurried visitors.

How far materialism has gone in replacing dutiolatry by worship of the golden calf, to what extent the old high ideals have ceased to affect the relations of the Japanese to one another—such a question is difficult, perhaps impossible, to answer satisfactorily. Mr. B. H. Chamberlain declares roundly that "patriotism is the only ideal left," but on such a nice point it is better to let the native speak for himself.

From *The Orient*, a monthly magazine, Buddhistic in sympathy and of modern tendency, is quoted the following unequivocal indictment:

"Spiritually there is very undeniable decadence.

Open ports, huge fleets of steamers, thousands of miles of rails, telephone and telegraph wires, a navy ranking at least seventh in the world's list, a consolidated postal system, flourishing banks, and all else of like nature, are nothing more than signs of material progress. Like our allies, we have grown worldly wise, and have come to view the almighty dollar with a feeling akin to veneration. People point, and with justice, to the tremendous social revolution of the Restoration days; but where we have got rid of *daimyō* and *shōmyō*, of *hatamoto* and *samurai*, have we not plutocrats and bureaucrats as potent and unconscionable as the most tyrannical of the one-time feudal barons? The outcast pariahs—the *eta*—no longer exist in law or name; but they exist in fact. The operatives of the Ōsaka mills, the wretched human shambles of the prostitute quarters, the sick and suffering poor—are these not social pariahs and even worse? We miss the sternly martial virtue of the days of yore; the unbending dignity of the true, the real *Yamato-damashii* (the spirit of Japanese chivalry). . . . Never were bribery and corruption more rife: the whole machinery of the State is suffering from this dry-rot; and even those who are called upon to set the country an example have their price. Nepotism is taking the place of clannish interdependence. One's fortunes are easily made if one happens to be a 'forty-second cousin' of a favourite courtesan, a popular *geisha*, or a spoiled mistress."

"Irresponsible rhetoric," the reader may think, "and indulged in the more freely because the writer chose to employ the English tongue, which is yet unknown to the majority of his countrymen. But these considerations do not apply to the official utterances of an

ex-Premier (Count Okuma) and his Minister of Education. The former, who is not chary of autobiography, in a speech which created some sensation confessed that as a young man he had been too dazzled by the splendour of Western civilisation to appreciate the seamy side of material progress, but recent experience of popular movements and public affairs had convinced him that the supreme need of all classes, if their prosperity were to continue, was a return to the higher morality of the past. Mr. Hayashi, who may be thought to have interpreted his duty of directing national education too literally, put the matter in a nutshell. "Let us suppose," said he to a popular audience, "that Japan in the course of a thousand years or so were to become a republic. If the same Mammon-worship should exist then as exists now, it is certain that the Vanderbilt or Jay Gould of the day would be elected President." Few nations care to be lectured in this way, even by Ministers of Education. The result was a violent agitation, fomented in the patriotic Press, which demanded the resignation of one who could be so disloyal to his sovereign as to hint at a possible republic ten centuries ahead. The rash moralist found it expedient to resign. Assuming, however, as one is perhaps entitled to assume, that the speaker had chiefly in mind the venality of politicians, I doubt very much either the extent or the heinousness of the evil denounced. Reduced to detail, the charges amount to this: that electors and deputies have been known to sell their votes and to advocate measures from which they have made preparations to derive financial benefit. Such evils are inseparable from the infancy of representative government, and persist in veiled form in its maturity. The Unionist member of

the Salisbury-Chamberlain party who has been called upon to vote successive bounties or remission of taxes to landed proprietors and clerical tithe-payers is guilty of somewhat similar acts, with this trifling difference: that instead of rewarding his supporters with money from his own purse, he draws upon the State treasury. It would not be surprising if Japanese politicians were more openly corrupt than our own, for most of them take American politics as the nearest and most friendly school of democracy—a school where self-seeking is avowedly the first duty of a public man, and where the prizes fall to the cleverest manipulator or servitor of plutocratic trusts. But, as a matter of fact, neither Tammany nor Panama is yet transplanted to the banks of Sumida-gawa. The laws aimed at electoral bribery are stringent and frequently enforced. Accusations of corruption are invariably followed by official inquiry. It is evident, then, that if the offender be sometimes clever enough to evade discovery, at least public opinion is neither cynical nor depraved. A stronger negative argument is furnished by the fact that the Liberals and Progressives (as the two anti-ministerial parties were called until the fusion in 1898), who had been excluded until that year from office, though constituting on more than one occasion a majority in the Lower House of the Diet, did not accuse the Ministers who launched Japan on the sea of parliamentary government of either misgovernment or dishonest finance. Nepotism was the sum and substance of their complaint. The Chōshī men monopolised the chief posts in the railway department, the Satsuma men held control of army and navy: in a word, the ascendency of the pre-revolutionary clans survived the revolution. But, when their own turn came in the summer of 1898

to divide the spoils of office, to which they had been summoned by the astuteness of Marquess Ito, prompt to cover personal chagrin at his own defeat by advocacy of his opponents' claims to Imperial recognition, the followers of Counts Okuma and Itagaki found it impossible to reconcile the claims of contending office-seekers. Indeed, so bitter did the dissensions become, that the alliance was dissolved, and the first Ministry based on a majority in the Lower House disbanded before the Diet met. Power has since reverted to the same men, whose sagacity has made Japan triumph alike over armed foes and treaty-allies. Seeing that no more than eight per cent. of the population have votes, participation in home politics is confined to a comparatively small circle; and not to all of them, since most of the merchants with whom I conversed on the subject were content to leave their interests in the hands of the authorities, and expressed great resentment at the action of the *sōshi* or professional agitators employed by politicians to cajole or threaten a constituency. It is inevitable at present that place and power should be the goal of all parties, and that politics should present the aspect of a scramble for office. There is no dividing-line between political parties, as elsewhere. No one desires to return to the feudal *régime*, or to tamper with the Constitution, or to limit the royal prerogative. In the face of national danger it is easy for all parties to unite, since nothing divides them but such questions as the incidence of taxation and the distribution of posts. In the course of time, should the last vestige of acquiescent docility on the part of the toilers be swept away, the industrial sphinx will pose its question to the Japanese as to all other modern communities; the rich will be ranged against the poor,

the socialist against the conservative. But, as things are now, even the loss of diplomatic prestige occasioned by the triumph of Russia in Manchuria, of which the blame cannot justly be assigned to isolated Japan, is counterbalanced by the careful development of military and commercial resources which would seem the crowning duty of the Emperor's advisers. The increasing prosperity of the country is the best answer to malevolent critics, and, if the charge of spiritual decadence in politics is to be sustained, weightier evidence must be produced than the writer has been able to discover.

Well, I have taken a bird's-eye view of the Japanese as they appear to the resident alien, because his protesting voice is generally drowned in the joyful ejaculations of passing travellers. I have put aside for the moment my own prepossessions, which were only strengthened by intercourse with natives of every class, in order that the dark side of the shield might not be veiled. Dishonest traders aided by tortuous enactments, and mistrustful teachers suspicious of Western propaganda, insubordinate inferiors and incompetent officials—all these constitute grave stumbling-blocks to happiness. But it would not be fair to ignore the facts which promise a brighter future. There are many firms whose integrity is unquestioned, many journalists who try to stem the current of national misunderstanding by sagacious counsel. Experience and fuller knowledge are sure to prove wholesome correctives. The anti-foreign bias, though real and formidable, is based on the fear of half-understood eventualities. Closer intercourse and wider education will cause wisdom to spread down from the rulers to the ruled, who are not yet on familiar terms with our conceptions of trade and government.

It is to be hoped, when the nation feels thoroughly at home in its new house, equipped from garret to cellar with the latest improvements and occupied by a tenant-proprietor whom no conceivable machination of jealous neighbours can dislodge, that even the foreign lodger will be permitted to exercise his calling without the slightest hindrance or disability. 

So much for the world behind the scenes, of which a glimpse has been vouchsafed to the reader. It will be seen that those who sustain *rôles* in the daintiest of comediettas are also cast for a problem-play; that they are no more exempt from envy, hatred, and vanity than other sensitive artists; that their professional dislike to alien amateurs, who add insult to injury by expecting the deference due to higher national status while competing for the pence and plaudits of the same public, is very human and not without excuse; that, in spite of these infirmities, they may be industrious bread-winners and excellent performers. After all, the proper place for sightseers is the front of the house. Let us go there, and forget the intrigues of the green-room, in which we have happily no concern. We have come many miles to witness the play; let us give it undivided attention.

## NOTE TO "BEHIND THE SCENES." CASSANDRA JUSTIFIED?

Though time and space had so muffled the protesting shrieks of Cassandra that I could no longer hear her whirling prophecies or follow her sorry fortunes from day to day in the chivalrous Press of the treaty-ports, I never lost interest or sympathy in her loudly predicted future. I would picture her borne with streaming eyes and hair from her extra-territorial temple; I would ask myself whether she had yet been borne off into bondage unspeakable by some Japanese Agamemnon. News travels slowly, and I was forced to content myself with the most meagre reports, when one day came a letter with the Yokohama postmark, in which the writer took exception to some statements made by me in a lecture to the Playgoers' Club on the subject of Japanese theatres, and improved the occasion by despatching much irrelevant information on the subject of Japanese iniquity. I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to Mr. F. Schroeder, the editor and proprietor of *The Eastern World*, for those letters and pamphlets. They assure me of the welcome fact that Cassandra is alive and free, and protesting more loudly than ever. I gladly give publicity to the incidents and speculations recorded in them, for, while they seem to justify honest apprehension on the part of Cassandra's friends, they also contain indications that Agamemnon is by no means so subject to Thersites as the foes of Far Eastern democracy would have us believe.

The question which raises most speculation, on account of the uncertainty of the law to be applied, is also the most important. It concerns leasehold. Hitherto foreigners had supposed themselves to hold land under a perpetual lease on payment of a lump sum to the vendor and of annual ground-rent to the Government. But, when a recent application was made to the local court in Yokohama for the registration of the transfer of property so held from one British subject to another, the Court replied that it had no power to register such a transfer, offering instead to describe the property as a perpetual superficies. The offer was refused and the point submitted to the British Minister. If it should be decided that the foreign owner is no more than a superficiary, the ground at a distance of more than thirty feet below the surface tacitly reverts to the Government, which of course would have the right to sell it for

mining purposes, for the construction of tunnels or reservoirs or what not, provided that the surface were neither entered nor broken. A change so radical in the conditions of holding land, which the purchaser may thus have acquired under a misapprehension, is serious enough, but more serious still will be its effect on future purchasers. By the newly codified law authorisation is refused to leases of longer than twenty years' duration. What foreign firm, desirous of a permanent footing on Japanese soil, would erect buildings and establish itself on land liable to be resumed by the owner at the end of so short a period? How easy for native traders under such circumstances to strangle or arrest the business of alien competitors! Should a score of years demonstrate the growth of too successful rivalry, they have merely to bring such pressure to bear on the lessor as would prevent renewal of the lease.

The *Tamba Maru* case, which originated in a somewhat ignoble squabble between the English third officer and the Japanese quartermaster of a Nippon Yusen Kwaisha steamer, assumes quite Homeric proportions in the pages of an *Eastern World* brochure. It certainly affords food for reflection on the methods of Oriental justice when racial prejudice intervenes, but the sequel shows that in Japan at any rate an appeal lies from prejudiced judges and partial witnesses to substantial wisdom and common-sense in high places. The facts are few and stirring. Horace Robert Kent had reported Umeseko Toyomatsu for smoking while on duty. His inexperienced eye had mistaken the glow of a jewel in the latter's ring for the glint of a cigarette. Fearful of losing his captain's good opinion and his place on board, the injured innocent invaded the mate's cabin with his cap on and flashed the exculpating jewel in that officer's face. Hand-to-hand scuffling ensued, of which contradictory accounts are naturally given, with the result that Toyomatsu received a black eye, was put in irons, and released at once to mollify his comrades, while Mr. Kent was bitten five or six times in the thigh and hidden by his prudent skipper from the vengeance of the crew. Each brought a charge of assault against the other. At the trial the evidence of eye-witnesses seems to have been entirely eclipsed by the opinions of medical gentlemen, who deserve the honours of the verdict. Dr. Sagara opined that a black eye (the organ not even being closed up) would prevent a sailor from work for more than twenty days, and would take from three to four weeks to heal completely; Dr. Fujise compared the wounds in the thigh of the third mate with the shape of the quartermaster's teeth, and found that they almost completely

coincided, but was still unable to assert that they were caused by biting. Sentences: six months' rigorous imprisonment for the Englishman, five days' detention for the Japanese. The inequality of the punishments was quickly remedied. The Tōkyō Court of Appeal quashed the decision of the original tribunal, and reduced the sentence from six months' imprisonment to ten days' detention. I dwell at some length on this trivial case of common assault for two reasons. First, it is satisfactory to remark how promptly an excess of partial severity was corrected; secondly, I feel sure that Mr. Kent is the only foreigner on whom the evil foretold by Cassandra has fallen within six months of the coming into operation of the treaties. Otherwise I should have received other and more indignant pamphlet-homilies on the baneful fulfilment of prophecy.

Finally, my informant calls attention to recent cases of official bribery and corruption. He cites the name of Mr. Koyama Konosuke, M.P., who was charged in Parliament with receiving a bribe of 2000 *yen* from the Government of the day (1899), and who, so far from denying it, sued in a court of law for the remainder of the money due to him. Being called upon by his constituents to resign, he replied with a threat of exposing implicated colleagues, and apparently retained his seat. Both Houses of the Legislature would seem to be tainted by similar practices, for *The Japan Mail* (of April 10, 1900) has a paragraph, headed "The Peers Scandal," to the following effect:

"It is now alleged that no less than twenty-four members of the House of Peers are implicated in the bribery scandal connected with the Religious Bill affair. Some of them are alleged to be desirous of hushing up the matter, but their fellow-members insist that something must be done to clear the reputation of the House. It is impossible to tell how much truth there may be in these rumours."

It is obviously "impossible" for a foreigner to collect such proofs of corruption as would be good evidence in a court of law, nor, if possible, would it be worth his while. The cry of *vendu* is so freely bandied by a factionist Press, that, remembering the famous legend of a Dreyfus syndicate, one hesitates to pin faith on vague paragraphs. Moreover, whatever foundation of fact underlie the charges, it should be borne in mind that parliamentary government has only existed for ten years, and it would not be reasonable to expect in a decade those virtues which were of very slow growth in our own Mother of Parliaments. Corruption at Pretoria or St. Petersburg is no bar to "the sympathies of the civilised world" (outside Anglo-

Saxondom), and in any case these evils may safely be left for correction to those whom they most immediately concern. The Japanese Press is conscious of them, anxious to deal with them; the laws are stringent enough, if difficult to enforce. One notes them as a factor in Japanese politics to be neither exaggerated nor ignored, and turns to consider less purely domestic matters.

Indirect confirmation of my impression that Christianity was losing ground in the country is furnished by the elaborate report of the American Board of Foreign Missions, of which the rose-coloured conclusions at first sight suggest the contrary. Stress is laid, for instance, on the fact that a prominent Christian was elected to the present Diet by a majority of five to one in Buddhist Kyōto; but there is nothing to show that the election turned on doctrinal issues. One Japanese Christian was appointed "moral teacher" in the Sugamo penitentiary, with the result that all the rest, Buddhists by faith, resigned. Political reasons probably caused this appointment, for Sugamo is the prison to which all foreign delinquents will be sent under the new *régime*. The Board complains of strong opposition to the teaching of the elements of the Christian religion, not only in public but also in private schools, centred in the Education Department, and attributes it to widespread agnosticism, which, so far as it desires to conserve Buddhist influence, does so for ulterior social and intellectual ends. But I find the clearest proof of simultaneous success and failure in the admission that Christianity maintains its hold by practical philanthropy. Schools for neglected and criminal children, schemes for relieving discharged prisoners, benevolent works of all kinds, are promoted and carried out by Christians. Of goodness of this sort the kind-hearted Japanese are thoroughly appreciative, but it is the works, not the faith, which they admire. Holders of all creeds, or of none, must sympathise with this aspect of missionary effort; but it results, and perhaps happily, in a closer union of hearts than of minds.

I conclude with a quotation from the *Jiji*, one of the most influential Tōkyō papers—a quotation which speaks for itself and accords with the sorrowful vaticinations of Cassandra:

"*Decrease in the Number of Foreign Residents.*—Quite contrary to expectations, there seems to be a gradual reduction in the number of foreigners residing in Yokohama, where they are more numerous than in any other part of the country. It is anticipated that the statistics will perhaps show some reduction for two or three years. The reason is supposed to be: (1) foreigners prefer Hongkong or

Shanghai to Japan, owing to the difficulty of finding opportunities for gaining as large profits as formerly; and (2) their unfamiliarity with the Japanese law, which imposes undue restraint upon their movements. As a matter of fact, they have been surprised by the imposition of heavy taxes of various kinds, never dreamt of previously. Moreover, in consequence of the coming into operation of the new tariff, they have been deprived of their profits on certain kinds of goods, such as liquors, cigars, &c. This is shown by the circumstance that the foreign merchants who have given up or are going to give up business are mostly dealers in these goods. In future foreigners who may be induced to come to this part of the world can only be, in consequence of the operation of the new treaties, those who have other objects than business and who will take the place of the present residents, who will certainly leave in the near future."

RELIGIOUS PLAYS

## RELIGIOUS PLAYS

The traveller who witnesses a "*Nō* Dance," hastily improvised for his amusement at the Maple Club of Tōkyō, or who chances upon a pantomimic duologue in grotesque costume, rendered on a rough platform to divert the crowd before a temple at the *matsuri*—half fair, half festival—can really form no idea of the exquisite little dramas which for more than five centuries have been performed privately in the houses of Japanese nobles and are still enacted at rare intervals to an invited audience. The common term "*Nō* Dance" is rather misleading, since it only suggests the rhythmic posturing of the characters—very graceful, it is true, and pregnant with meaning for the initiated—but ignores other factors, such as the words, the story, and the music, which contribute quite as memorably to the total effect. Operetta will not do, since the choric strains, which stimulate attention and intensify emotion with their staccato accompaniment, are subordinate throughout. If, then, that may be styled a play which revolves on a single episode and relates to no more than three or four persons, a very close parallel lies between these and the religious plays of Europe. In both you find the same reverence for the

past, dictating the devout demeanour of actors and audience; in both a minute traditional interpretation, governing the diction, the action, and the dress; in both a perpetual association of the scenes depicted with sacred legends and the spirit world. But whereas Christianity yields one and the same drama, once in a decade, to the peasants of Oberammergau, the Shintōist Pantheon, sanctifying national history and full of deified heroes, appeals to both patriotic and religious instincts through the medium of an art sometimes immature but always refined.

The roots of this musical pantomime reach far back into mythōlogical times. The figure of the Terrible Female of Heaven, stamping on an inverted tub to startle the Sun Goddess from her cave, is generally invoked on the threshold of inquiries into the origin of *Kagura*, or temple-dancing. Grotesque and venerable, it is not illuminating. More startling to me is the statement of a modern authority that "in the eighth century, in the later period of the Nara dynasty and at the beginning of the Heian period, combining the Korean and the Chinese music with the native, a certain perfect form of Japanese music came to exist." To comprehend this "perfect music," as rendered on drum, fife, and flute, esoteric education is required. But it may be admitted that certain Wagnerian effects of terror and suspense and tumultuous agitation are thumped and wailed into the auditor, while his ocular attention is absorbed by deliberate phantoms. Very deliberate are the phantom dancers, whether their theme be simple or complex. On the dancing stages at the Shintō temples of Ise and of Omi, on the four platforms of the Kasuga Temple at Nara, the subject was naturally mythological or had relation to the

temple's own history. Such songs as went with the dance were simple, short, and primitive. They would be heard at Court ceremonies, too, for the union of Church and State was close. They were sung by members of privileged families, who guarded and transmitted from father to son the professional secrets of their "perfect music."

However, the beginning of the Ashikaga period in the fourteenth century saw the corruption and development of a perfect germ into complex variety. Both sacred and secular rivalry contributed to this result. The *Biwa-hōshi*, blind priests and lute-players, who went from castle to castle of the Daimyōs, singing *Heike-monogatari*, historical romances of warlike quality in prose and verse, opened new vistas of subject-matter, while *Shirabyōshi*, the refined and cultivated precursor of the comparatively modern geisha, extended both the scope and the significance of posture-dancing. The *Kioku-mai*, or memory-dance, came into vogue, being characterised by closer co-ordination of music and movement, while the accompanying song would often celebrate a romantic episode or a famous landscape. Many of these songs survive, embedded in the chorus of *Nō* texts; in fact, they may be regarded as the nucleus of *Nō* drama.

The Muromachi Shōgunate witnessed the final transition from dance to drama, recitative and singing speeches and *dramatis personæ* being superadded to the chorus. Kiyotsugu (who died in 1406) and his son Motokiyo (who died in 1455) are generally credited with this development. They belonged to the Yusaki family—one of the four families who exercised hereditary management of the Nara stage. They held a small estate, and succeeded in winning the Shōgun's

patronage for their *Sarugaku* or *Nō*, which became extremely popular at Court. Naturally enough, the choric songs became panegyrics of the reigning Shōgun, and helped to embellish his Court pageants.

It is not believed that the actor-manager did more than prepare and conduct the *Nō*, in which music and dancing were still the chief features. The author was contented to remain anonymous, and that for good reasons. Intellectual light shone mostly in the monasteries during that dark age of feudal fighting. If the Buddhist monk could make of this aristocratic amusement a vehicle for Buddhist teaching, individual obscurity was a small price to pay for corporate influence. Therefore, while it cannot be stated as a fact that the famous priests Ikkiu and Shiuran wrote the finest *Nō* poetry, it is certain that *yurei* or ghosts and Buddhist exorcisers became very common characters on the *Nō* boards, while the chorus betrayed (as I am told) "many deep conceptions of mystic religion." What higher compliment has ever been paid to art, dramatic or pictorial, than the struggles of priests and politicians to wield its influence? There is something pathetic in this aspect of the rivalry for Terpsichore's hand. At first she wore the red trousers of a Shintō priestess and was wooed by the Mikado. Then the Shōgun came, a strong man armed, and with him she danced into the Buddhist camp.

The sixteenth century gave the final touch to this musical drama, which approximated more and more to secular plays without ever entirely losing its official character. The ghosts faded out, the Buddhist influence grew less marked, for it had to traverse the tyranny of Nobunaga, who patronised Christianity and destroyed the monasteries of Hiei-zan. But hence-

forward, as an aristocratic institution, the *Nō* was to retain its popularity, though since the sixteenth century none have been written. A programme is still extant on which the two greatest names in Japanese history, those of Hideyoshi and Iyeyasu, star the list of performers. The actors were treated as *samurai*, military retainers, though the performers in popular *shibai* (theatres) were held in contempt. In the latest specimens knighthood is the invariable theme, set to more various music and illustrated by more violent posturing.

Throughout the Tokugawa era (1602–1868) every Daimyō who could afford it maintained a troupe of *Nō* players to reproduce for his edification the thoughts and habits of mediæval art. Old costumes, old masks, old music were faithfully preserved; no innovation of text or interpretation was allowed by the hereditary custodians and directors. And since the shock of the Restoration a reaction has set in, favouring their revival.

At present there are in Tōkyō six troupes of *Nō* players, with a *répertoire* of from two to three hundred plays. These retain so firm a hold on cultured conservatives—the younger generation finds them slow—that Mr. Matsumoto Keichi, one of the leading publishers, is now issuing a series of one hundred and eighty-three illustrative colour prints—*Nō no ye*—whose fine drawing and delicately blent hues are as superior to the flamboyant aniline horror by which the Nihon-bashi print-seller advertises the newest blood-and-thunder melodrama as that itself is inferior to the aristocratically-nurtured *Nō*. Reproduced as faithfully as may be, the pictures of Mr. Kogyo will, I hope, impress the reader with the archaic simplicity and beauty of the original design, provided that he

have the gift of sympathetic intuition, so as to divine what tale of terror, what burden of grief, obscure to him, is yet manifest enough behind quaint mask and rigid gesture to the heirs of national hagiology. The solemnity and pathos of each dramatised incident in the life of hero or saint is emphasised by the time-honoured locutions of mediæval Japanese, which of course convey by mere association, as Elizabethan English to us, the tone and atmosphere of dead centuries. Yet, independently of the musical old speech, so cumbrous and so courteous, it is impossible to miss the meaning of these tiny tragedies, enacted as they are by instinctive masters of gesticular eloquence. The writer was particularly fortunate in gaining admission to a series of *Nō* produced by the Umewaka company or society, which has this advantage over the other five organisations, diverging on points of textual accuracy and stage ritual, that it traces unbroken descent through its chief from the Kanza school of music appertaining to the Yusaki family of Nara. When Commodore Perry forced open the door of the East in 1854, hitherto closed for more than two hundred years to Western barbarians, Mr. Umewaka captained a little band of *Nō* players attached to the then all-powerful household of Keiki, the last of the Tokugawa Shōguns.

Then followed bloody civil war, the bombardment of Kagoshima and Shimonoseki, and the restoration of the Emperor to supreme power. The ex-Shōgun immured himself, a private gentleman, in strict seclusion. His company of players was of course disbanded, but little by little, from rare representations in the houses of friends to more frequent revivals, consequent on growing fame, their erudite and

enthusiastic chief was able to found his present very flourishing society. One gentleman, an ex-Daimyō, presented the troupe with a large stage of polished pine from his dismantled castle; a second contributed a priceless store of plays in manuscript; Mr. Umewaka himself brought the best gift of all, profound and practical knowledge of the stage technique, which is curiously elaborate in spite of seeming simplicity, and bristles with professional secrets. The orchestra consisted on this occasion of a flute and two *taiko*, drums shaped like a sand-glass and rapped smartly with the open palm. At irregular intervals, timed no doubt by the exigencies of the text, the musicians emitted a series of staccato cries or wailing notes, which seemed to punctuate the passion of the player and insensibly tightened the tension of the auditor's nerves. In two rows of three on the right of the stage sat the chorus, six most "reverend signiors" in the stiff costume of Samurai, who intervened now and again with voice and fan, the manipulation of the latter varying with the quality of the strains assigned to the singers. In placid moments the fan would sway gently to and fro, rocked on the waves of quasi-Gregorian chanting, but, when blows fell or apparitions rose, it was planted, menacing and erect, like a danger-signal before the choralist's cushion. The musicians were seated on low stools at the back of the stage before a long screen of conventional design, in which green pines trailed across a gold ground, harmonising admirably with the sober blues and browns of their *kimono*.

A glance at the programme gave assurance of prolonged and varied entertainment, since no less than five religious plays and three *kiōgen* (lit. mad words),

or farcical interludes, were announced in the following order:

1. *Shunkwan*, the High-Priest in Exile.
2. *Koi no Omone*, the Burden of Love.
3. *Aoi no Uye*, the Sick Wife.
4. *Funa Benkei*, Benkei at Sea.
5. *Tsuchigumo*, the Earth-Spider.

*Kiōgen.*

1. *Kitsune-Tsuki*, Possession by Foxes.
2. *Roku Jizō*, the Six Jizō.
3. *Fukuro Yamabusshi*, the Owl-Priest.

By an hour before noon the audience, seated on cushions in little pews holding four or six persons, had composed itself to that air of thoughtful anticipation which I had hitherto associated with devotees of Ibsen or Wagner. Many peered through gold spectacles at the copies of the antique text, whose phraseology was not without difficulties even for the scholars and artists present; the women's faces were far graver and more thoughtful than one usually sees in the land of laughing *musumé*; the prevailing grey and black worn by women and men suffered sporadic invasions of bright colour wherever you saw children settling, like human butterflies. For these, though their ears availed them little, could follow with wondering eyes the strange succession of gorgeous or terrible figures—warriors and spectres and court-ladies—evoked for their delight.

The story of Shunkwan, however, was quite devoid of spectacular appeal. Exiled in 1177 with other rebellious priests by Kiyomori, the ruthless Taira chief, to Devil's Island (Kikai-gashima), he is discovered celebrating with his companions an oblation to Kumano Gongen and praying for speedy restitution



Shunkwan in exile.

to his fatherland. Pitiful indeed is the case of these banished suppliants, who wear the blue-and-white hempen skirts of fishermen and whose penury is such that they are obliged to bring the god water instead of *saké*, sand instead of rice, and hempen fetters instead of white prayer-cord. Kumano Gongen hears and answers their petition. An imperial messenger arrives from Kyōto with a letter from the daughter of Shunkwan, announcing that the Son of Heaven, Lord of the Land of the Rising Sun, has been graciously pleased to recall his erring subjects, pardoning their offences and inviting their prayers for an expected heir to the throne. Beaming with grateful joy, the old man now scans the imperial mandate more closely, only to find that his own name is omitted from the list of those forgiven. Yasugori and Moritsuné will be taken, but he, Shunkwan, must be left. In vain do his fellow-exiles lament and protest; all know that the Son of Heaven's decree must be obeyed to the letter. Accordingly, the others embark, while their disappointed chief falls, speechless and hopeless, on the shore. A simple, poignant story! So touchingly interpreted, that the primitive and even ludicrous makeshifts of the mounting seemed hardly incongruous! The mooring and unmooring of the boat, for which the crudest parody in outline of rope and wood did duty, and the final embarkation (as represented in the picture) were gravely accomplished in complete immunity from ill-timed laughter; the messenger's grotesque *hakama*, elongated trousers, trailing a good yard behind the feet, that the wearer might seem to walk on his knees while about his master's business, provoked no smile; in fact, any trivial details and defects were swallowed up in the

prodigious earnestness of the actors. The part of Shunkwan was played by Mr. Umewaka himself with much pathos, depending entirely on tone, carriage, and gesture, since all facial expression is barred by the strict convention of playing the *Nō* in masks. While the presentation of spectres and supernatural beings must be facilitated by this custom, since many of the masks are masterpieces of imaginative skill, yet, where the interest is purely human, that illusion at which all drama aims is proportionately diminished.

Now came the children's turn to laugh at the first of the *kiōgen*, entitled *Kitsune Tsuki*, "Possession by foxes." Most of the comical interludes deal with rustic stupidity or cunning, and all refer in some way to religious belief or practice. If one may judge by the ubiquity of his images, the fox is the most sacred animal in Japan. No shrines are so numerous as those of Inari, the rice-goddess, and before each stand two white foxes, with snarling lips and teeth clenched on a mysterious golden object, which completely baffled the curiosity of M. Loti, though later writers declare it to be no more than a key, symbolising the portal of wealth unlocked by divine favour. But Inari herself is completely eclipsed in popular awe by her attendant foxes. It is they who, if not propitiated, ruin the rice crop; they who have the power, like the weir-wolf, of assuming human shape and of "possessing" unfortunate beings, whose only chance of delivery lies in exorcism by a priest. In the case of the *kiōgen* now presented this superstition had been turned to comical use. We learned that Farmer Tanaka had sent two of his men into the fields with rattles to scare away birds, laying on them many injunctions to beware of the dæmonic fox, Kitsune, whose exploits had lately

made him the terror of that neighbourhood. The warning is but too effectual. So full are the watchers' minds of the dread of fox-possession, that, when their master appears, with a jug of *saké* in his hand as a reward and refreshment after labour, they believe him to be Kitsune, the tempter, and thrash him soundly out of his own rice-field!

Some have asserted that love, the romantic and chivalrous love of Western literature, is absent alike from the art and letters of Japan. Nevertheless, what could be more romantic than the title and plot of the play, attributed to the Emperor Gohanazono though signed by Motokiyo—"Koi no Omoni," "The Burden of Love"? The lover is Yamashina Shoji, an old man of high birth, but miserably poor, to whom out of charity has been entrusted the tending of the Emperor's chrysanthemums. A court-lady, seen by chance one day as he raised his head from the flowers, inspires a passion which he feels to be beyond hope or cure. He confides his unhappiness to one of the courtiers, who counsels him to carry a burden round and round the garden many times, until, haply, the lady "seeing, may relent." This he does. At first the burden seems light as air, being buoyantly borne, but gradually it grows heavier and heavier, until at last he staggers to the ground, crushed to death by unavailing love. Soon after his ghost appears, a melancholy spectre with long white hair and gown of silver-grey, with wattled staff and eyes of hollow gold. At this point all chivalry certainly vanishes, for the angry apparition stamps and glares, and, shaking locks and staff, stoutly chides the beauty for her callous cruelty. The lady does not once intervene, but throughout the piece sits motionless, a figure rather than a person, her eyes fixed on the burden

itself, as it lies, concrete and symbolic, wrapped in apple-green brocade, near the front-centre of the stage. This inclusion of a significant silent object among the *dramatis personæ* is curiously effective. The sight of Yamashina tottering beneath a physical weight would have made clumsy prose of a beautiful poetic truth. His feelings are better conveyed by the dirge-like song and lugubrious posturing, which poverty of language compels one to miscall a "dance." Full of dignity and fine gesture is the ghost's rebuke. Slowly revolving on his heels, or tossing back his streaming, silvery hair, now dashing his staff upon the ground, now raising his *kimono* sleeve slowly to hide his face, one felt that this weird figure was expressing elemental passion in a language more elemental than speech. I cannot say as much for the lady, whose coronet of thin gold with silver crescent in front and pendent pagoda-bells on either side, surmounting a mask of singular ugliness, seemed the fantastic headpiece of a crude idol very foolishly idealised. But it served to illustrate, with an irony which the imperial author had not intended, the so grievous "burden of love."

Kyōto court-life of the twelfth century, painted for posterity in the famous, interminable pages of "Genji Monogatari," one of the oldest achievements of the lady-novelist, has found less tedious and equally faithful presentment in such dramatic miniatures as "Aoi no Uye," Prince Genji's long-suffering wife. Jealousy is the keynote of this lyrical play—that insatiable, self-torturing jealousy which is the hardest of demons to expel. Again I noticed a piece of curious, silent symbolism. The poor, demoniac wife, who gives her name to the play, does not appear, either as person or figure: in her stead a long strip of folded brocade,

suggesting a bed of sickness, lies immediately behind the footlights. Thus, though sub-conscious of her entity, the spectator is compelled to focus all attention on the apparition, which takes double form. First comes the spirit of the Princess Rokijo, who takes vengeance on her false lover (Genji is the Don Juan of Japan) by haunting the helpless Aoi in the shape of a pale wailing woman. A *miko*, or Shintō priestess, is summoned to exorcise the intruder. In vain she rubs her green rosary, muttering fervid prayers: the spirit wails more loudly, more intolerably, and only yields at last to the fiercer spells and rougher wrestling of soul with soul on the part of a mountain-priest. But his victory is short-lived, for a terrible phantom, the Devil of Jealousy, wearing the famous Hanja mask, replaces Rokujo. Inch by inch the priest falls back, as the grinning demon with gilt horns and pointed ears slowly unveiled from a shroudlike hood glides forward to smite him with menacing crutch. To and fro the battle rages beside the prostrate Aoi no Uye; neither holy man nor devil will give way; the screaming and shrill fifing of the musicians rise to frenzied pitch; adjuration succeeds adjuration, until the evil spirit is finally driven away. Nothing can exceed the realism of this scene, so masterfully played that the hardiest agnostic must be indeed fancy-proof if he cannot feel something of the awe inspired into believers by this terrific duel. Moreover, this is exactly the sort of incident which exhibits to the full extent of their potency the peculiar characteristics of *Nō* drama. What human face, however disguised and distorted, could rival the malignant horror of a Japanese mask? What mincing and gibing Mephistopheles could compare for a moment with the devilish ingenuity and

suspense of this posture-pantomime, with its endless feints and threats and sallies and retreats? And how the anguish of battle is enhanced by the "barbaric yawp" and sharp, intermittent drum-taps, which excite without distracting the spell-bound audience! So abrupt and discreet is the interjected cry of the immobile musicians that one might easily take it for the defiant or hortative outburst of an invisible spirit attracted to the ghostly combat. Indeed, all that is wild and primitive in these *enfants sauvages* of Melpomene is chastened into harmony by the innate sobriety of Japanese art. The creative instinct works within small limits by small means, but with these means it contrives to project on its tiny stage a vital suggestion of the largest issues. The gods become marionettes for an hour, without wholly losing their godhead.

Good-humoured drollery, of which the gods come in for a fair share, is no more alien to the Japanese than it was to the Greek temperament. And if one had to guess which divinity or divinities are regarded with more affection than awe by such light-hearted worshippers, one would certainly name the Rokujizō, or six Jizō. While Buddha and Kwannon, Tenjin and Inari, dwell in small or stately temples, augustly apart, the six Jizō sit sociably in a row by the roadside or on the outskirts of a shrine, protected (if protected at all) from the weather by a plain wooden shed. For they belong to the class of open-air minor deities familiarly known as "wet gods." Yet they play a large part in the emotional life of the people. Patrons of travellers, women, and children, they bear the semblance of a shaven priest with benevolent countenance, whose neck is generally encircled with a

child's bib of coloured wool, while his hand holds an emblematic jewel, a lotus, a pilgrim's staff, an incense-box, a rosary, or sometimes an infant. In most villages and near many schools will you find the six Jizō, for the country people, loving their children, cherish the children's patron-saint with particular attachment. The amusing *kiōgen* named "Rokujizō" seemed to please the younger members of our audience infinitely more than the romantic and spectral dramas which preceded it. A pious farmer, anxious to attest his gratitude for a good harvest, resolves to put up six Jizō effigies in his fields, and, seeking a sculptor to carry out his design, falls in with a knavish fellow who boasts that he can carve statues more quickly than any one else in the world, and promises that the six shall be finished by the following day. The bargain is concluded. Then the pseudo-sculptor persuades three confederates to personate Jizō, entrusting them with the jewel, the staff, and the other symbols. As soon as they are well posed as living statuary, he brings the farmer to admire them, and, pretending that the other three are at the opposite end of the field, sends the extemporised gods by a short cut to anticipate the buyer's arrival. He, however, though duly impressed, desires to see the first three again, and then again the second three, until the impersonators, tired with running backwards and forwards, forget what pose and what emblem to assume, entirely destroying all illusion by their ridiculous perplexity. The farmer discovers the trick, and administers a sound drubbing to the fraudulent artist, while the Jizō make their escape. The humour of this naturally depends on the "business" of the performers, since no pretence is made to literary merit in the dialogue,

which is couched in colloquial Japanese of the same period as the lyrical dramas themselves—that is, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.

The most important, if not the most interesting, item in the programme was a little historic play in two scenes, entitled "Funa Benkei," or "Benkei at Sea." No figure in Japanese annals is so popular as Benkei, the devil youth (*Oniwaka*), credited with eight feet of stature, unless it be Yoshitsune, the valiant boy, who vanquished the giant in single combat on Gojō Bridge in Kyōto, and thus acquired a loyal and invincible henchman. The numberless adventures in which Benkei by strength or cunning ensures the success of Yoshitsune have been utilised again and again by painters and playwrights. Unfortunately, the fruits of victory are always snatched from Yoshitsune's grasp by the jealous despotism of his elder brother, Yoritomo, the terrible chief of the Minamoto faction. When the play opens he is discovered with a handful of faithful followers at Omono-no-ura, whither he has fled to escape the machinations of his brother; but further progress is delayed by the arrival of Shizuka, a beautiful geisha, who entreats permission to bid him farewell. Benkei refuses to allow this, and asserts that his master wishes her to return at once to Kamakura, the capital, without an audience. But the girl will not believe that her lover has sent so harsh a message, and insists on dancing once more before him. Shizuka's dance is very elaborate and beautiful, though a little tedious for the European, who has not been trained to appreciate the symbolic import of woven measure and waving arm. At the outset a tall golden head-dress, in shape like an elongated Phrygian cap, is carefully placed on her head. In

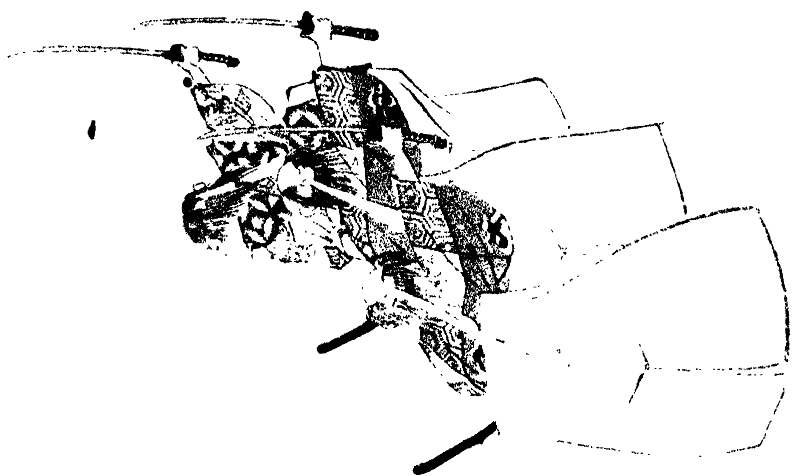
this she revolves and slowly, slowly expresses by that choregraphic language—which the profane would take years to acquire—all her passion and despair at losing her lover and lord. Yoshitsune, deeply moved, gives her a *saké* cup, as a sign that she may carouse with him for the last time; but Benkei, sternly insensible to dalliance, bids her withdraw and gives orders to set sail.

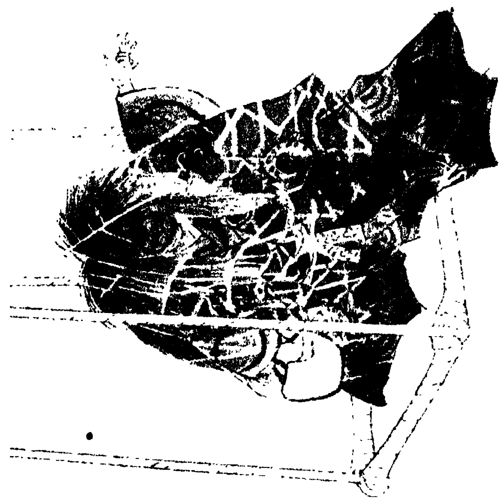
Once more the performers take their places in a primitive piece of framework representing a boat, while the resources of orchestra and helmsman are taxed to their utmost in the endeavour to simulate a storm. The fife screams, the drums thunder, the steersman stamps his foot, and suddenly out of the furious tempest rise grim spectres with black, fleecy hair, gilt horns, and blood-stained halberds. These are the ghosts of the Taira clan, slaughtered by the Minamoto in a great sea-fight at Dan-no-ura, two years before—a battle which might be termed the Bosworth Field of the great civil war which devastated Japan in the latter half of the twelfth century. Yoshitsune with youthful heat (he is always a boy in the *Nō* dramas) lunges at the phantoms and shouts his war-cry, but Benkei (who adds the functions of a priest to his other accomplishments) strikes down his sword, and, producing a rosary, hurls a volley of exorcising prayers at the discomfited ghosts. As always, the play ends in David's deliverance from danger by the resourcefulness of Goliath.

"Tsuchigumo," the Earth-Spider, the last piece performed, is founded on a curious legend, whose chief merit may be that it affords excuse for a fantastic stage-picture. It seems that a band of robbers, who lived in caves and were known by the nickname of

earth-spiders, were routed from their lairs and exterminated by Kintaro, servant of Yoremitsu, whose valour was much enhanced in popular estimation by the flattering rumour that the defeated pests were not men at all, but a race of enormous demon-insects. Accordingly, the climax of "Tsuchigumo" is a stirring encounter between Imperial Guards, armed with swords and spears, and masked monsters, who entangle their weapons and baffle their aim in a cloud of long gauzy filaments, resembling the threads of a spider's web. The piece is pure pantomime, owing even less than usual to music, incident, or poetic style. "The Owl-Priest," the last of the *kiōgen*, calls for no description.

Such are the religious plays in their last phase of development, the fruit of a religious revival on the part of archæologists and patriots. They are a curious instance of wisely arrested growth. Had they never passed the border-line of archaic dancing, their interpreters would be a dwindling band of Shintō priestesses to gaping peasants. Had they followed in the track of popular drama, they might have been expanded to those loosely-knit and blood-curdling tableaux which delight the shopkeeper. But, being compressed within severe limits and addressed to none but educated audiences, they present in exquisite epitome the literature, the history, the musical and choregraphic art of mediæval Japan. The foreigner derives from them an impression of the beliefs and customs, the manners of speech and dress, the heroism and the dignity, of feudal times. But to a native they convey far more than this. "The *Nō* poetry," writes an enthusiast, "is like a great store of the treasures of Eastern culture. It is full of allusions to the classical stories of 'Manyōshū' and 'Kokinshu,' Chinese





poetry and Buddhist scriptures. Its chief characteristic is colour. The words are gorgeous, splendid, and even magnificent, as are the costumes." But of their literary value, and how far that value is enhanced or impaired by flying puns and prismatic pillow-words, I cannot judge. The Buddhist authorship is very obvious in the case of "Aoi no Uye," for it will be noticed that, where the *miko*, or Shintō priestess, failed to exorcise the Demon of Jealousy, the priest of Buddha succeeded. But perhaps, in art of this kind, so innocent of construction, so dependent on allusion, it matters very little that the author should efface himself behind the ideals advocated in his work. The *Nō* are frankly didactic. Piety, reverence, martial virtues are openly inculcated, though never in such a way as to shock artistic sensibilities. Beauty and taste go far to disguise all structural deficiencies.

But let us not apply to these the standard by which we judge mature drama, demanding situation, character, plot, movement. Rather compare them with the miracle-plays and mysteries of the Chester or Coventry collection, which hover between scriptural tableaux and Gothic farce of a peculiarly gross kind. There is no beauty in those rhymed versions of "The Descent into Hell," "Adam and Eve," or "The Temptation in the Wilderness." The authors had such small sense of decency and congruity, that after a serious attempt to handle a solemn vision in "Pilate's Wife's Dream," you are confronted with this stage-direction: ("*Here shall the Devil go to Pilate's wife and draw the curtain, as she lieth in bed, but she, soon after that he is come in, shall make a rueful noise, running on the scaffold with her shirt and her kirtle in her hand, and she shall come before Pilate like a mad woman.*") Imagine the

wildest of *kiōgen* incidents invading a *Nō*! How shocked a Japanese audience would have been! If the *Nō* seem occasionally *naïf* and puerile, the gross *enfantillage* of European miracle-plays none but readers of them can believe. And, when we reach the tedious "Moralities," which coincided in this country with the advent of the Protestant Tudors, and were therefore written a century later than the best of the *Nō*, the palm of sacred drama for beauty, interest, and pathos must still be awarded to the disciples of Buddha. Could anything less human or less dramatic be imagined than a cast of personified abstractions, bearing such names as Good Counsel, Knowledge, Abominable Living, and God's Merciful Promises? We must console ourselves with the reflection that, when once the stage had freed itself from ecclesiastical fetters, the popular drama in England shot far ahead of popular drama in Japan. No student of dramatic art could think for a moment of bracketing Chikamatsu with Shakespeare.

# POPULAR PLAYS

# POPULAR PLAYS

## I

Between the sacred opera of Tōkyō and the comic opera of London the difference is so stupendous, that one shudders to reflect on the unfortunate fact that English playgoers, until quite lately, derived most of their ideas about Japan from "The Mikado" of Mr. W. S. Gilbert and "The Geisha" of Mr. Owen Hall. In 1885 so little was known about Japanese customs and characteristics, that the Bab Balladist ran no risk of insulting the intelligence of his auditors when he introduced his puppets with the words:

> "We are gentlemen of Japan,
> Our attitude's queer and quaint;
> You're wrong, if you think it ain't."

There was no one to tell him that his "gentlemen of Japan" were not Japanese at all, but Chinamen without pigtails. The very names — Pish-Tush, Nanki-Poo, Pitti-Sing—were redolent of China, while Pooh-Bah, with his insatiable appetite for bribes, was a typical mandarin. However, the author had picked up a real war-song, tune and all ("Miyasama, miyasama"), and the Three Little Maids from School giggled very prettily in their novel costumes. Subse-

quent information throws a curious light on the misleading characteristics of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera, enabling me to acquit the producers of ignorance, but not of mystification. I learn that the Japanese representative accredited to the Court of St. James's very naturally objected to the slight implied in attaching the name of his imperial master to a frivolous and ridiculous extravaganza. One would have thought that the most obvious obligations of courtesy dictated a change of title and of rank in the leading character. Instead, pains were taken to make the action and demeanour of the performers so exaggerated that no Japanese would recognise in them his fellow-countrymen, while the British public, not being in the secret, was encouraged to suppose the local colour as correct as was compatible with the exigencies of such a piece.

Eleven years later came "The Geisha." By this time Mr. Arthur Diósy had founded the Japan Society, and gladly brought special knowledge to the help of the management. The result was a very charming and realistic picture, so far as externals were concerned. The rickshaw-man and dapper policeman, the wistaria and chrysanthemum, the frolicsome teahouse girls, might have been imported from Yokohama. This author, too, had picked up a real native song ("Jon kina, jon kina"), of which the associations were fortunately not explained to the audience. But the plot of "The Geisha" was as farcically untrue to life as that of "The Mikado." And this time some one was found to say so. An indignant Tōkyō journalist, who happened to see the opera, thus commented on its import:

"The idea of Japan prevalent in foreign countries is thus reflected:

"Happy Japan,
  Garden of glitter!
Flower and fan,
  Flutter and flitter;
Lord of Bamboo,
  (Juvenile whacker!)
Porcelain too,
  Tea-tray and lacquer!"

"Light-hearted friends of Japan find in these lines the most happy features of the country, and overlook the gross injustice done in the play to the Japanese nation. A Japanese chief of police is made to proclaim publicly that superior authority exists in order to satisfy the personal desires of its holder. Human souls are sold by public auction, and a person may be found guilty, according to law, after trial or before! I would not complain of these imputations, or rather results of ignorance, creeping into a comic piece if it were not patronised by those who think themselves good friends of Japan, and if it were not illustrative of the way in which they look at our country."

At last, in September 1899, a serious romantic play, purporting to represent Japanese life, was produced under the title of "The Moonlight Blossom." It was even more faithfully staged than the comic operas. We now saw for the first time a Shintō priest, a blind shampooer, and a temple with wooden *torii* and stone lanterns. The plot was compounded of Adelphi elements, familiar enough, in spite of their flavouring from Liberty's. You had the good and bad brothers, the misunderstood heroine, the intriguing widow, forged documents, secret meetings, attempted murder. You had even the "comic relief" and cockney humour of a duel on stilts. But Adelphi incidents would not

have mattered so much (the Tōkyō drama is mostly melodrama) if the author had avoided Adelphi psychology. No Japanese woman indulges in the independence or the invective of Naniwa. "What stupid owls men are!" might pass for a maidenly jest in this country; never in that. If Arumo were truly a Nagasaki priest, he would never condescend to solicit the advice and affection of the other sex. The fatal substitution of Occidental for Oriental particulars in "the way of a man with a maid" vitiated Mr. Fernald's claim to interpret Japanese romance. His men and women lacked the dignity and severity of Eastern etiquette.

In adapting "Madame Butterfly," a popular American story, for the Anglo-Saxon stage, Mr. David Belasco was on far safer ground. Since M. Pierre Loti set the fashion, many romancers have exploited the pathos of temporary marriage between the faithless Westerner and the trustful Oriental girl, but hitherto, in spite of the obvious opportunities for scenic effect, the theme had not been handled by a serious dramatist. Now, Mr. Belasco relies greatly, as all who saw his version of "Zaza" will remember, on the electrician and the limelight man. To them belongs the credit of the most exquisite and typical episode in "Madame Butterfly." As poor little O Chō San sat patiently at her window, with her baby asleep beside her and her face turned towards the harbour where lay the newly arrived ship of her fickle lieutenant, for full twenty minutes there was silence behind the footlights, while through the paper panes of the *shōji* could be seen the transition of dusk to darkness, of darkness to twilight, of dawn to day. All the poetry of the play was in those twenty minutes, and a great deal of its truth.

Devotion and dumb endurance are more characteristic, I think, of such a woman than the melodramatic suicide which touched so many of her audience to tears. If a competent musician had co-operated with the stage-manager to give us a play without words in the manner of "L'Enfant Prodigue," I should have been better pleased, for the strange "broken American" jargon and the silly monotonous song which Miss Evelyn Millard had to say and sing, though legitimate enough, were tiresomely out of harmony with the grace and beauty of her movements, her looks, her costume. An extraordinary lapse of taste was that which permitted the dying heroine to wave the star-spangled banner in her child's face. But most of all I doubt the verisimilitude of the alleged motive for self-destruction. Sometimes Madame Chrysanthème counts her money and feels rather relieved when her foreign lover sails away; sometimes she regrets him with genuine sorrow, and might conceivably put an end to her life if confronted with the alternative of an odious match. But what she would not do is what Madame Butterfly does—namely, consider that she had suffered a dishonour expiable only by death. The Western sentiment of honour is out of place in such a connection, for she had been party with open eyes to a legal, extra-marital contract, sanctioned by usage and arranged by her relations. The infidelity of her partner might wound her heart; it could not strike her conscience.

After many more or less accurate adumbrations of Japanese life on the boards of London theatres, at last, in the spring of 1900, came "The celebrated Japanese Court Company from Tōkyō," of which the leading stars, Mr. Otojiro Kawakami and Madame Sada

Yacco, were freely described as the Henry Irving and Ellen Terry of the Far East. Most of the critics, expecting too much and understanding too little, went empty away, or if they derived any pleasure from the entertainment, derived it from purely æsthetic and undramatic qualities. For a week the stars shone on empty benches; but then the fashionable and artistic public, which has a habit of ignoring the professional critic, became aware of the fact that a miniature comedy and tragedy of rare delicacy and charm, as *naïf* as they were beautiful, could be seen, and seen only for a few afternoons, in the prosaic neighbourhood of Notting Hill. Success was assured, and we are promised a return visit in the autumn. But the critics were partly justified in their cold reception of alien art. They had come for drama and been put off with pantomime. "If this be Japanese drama," they said, "a little of it goes a long way. We have had enough." Had they been given drama as it is played in Tōkyō, with long, irrelevant scenes and a plot requiring four hours to unravel, how much more discontented they would have been!

It is a pity that the advertising note was pitched too high. Good wine needed less bush. There is no "Japanese Court Company," but his Majesty the Emperor was once present at a performance by Mr. Kawakami during a garden-party in the grounds of the Marquis Kuroda. Mr. Kawakami is certainly not the "Henry Irving of Japan," for that title, whatever be its precise meaning, belongs rather to Ichikawa Danjuro, associated for more than half a century with the impersonation of historical and mythical heroes. But he holds a high and honourable position among actors of the *sōshi* school, as they are called—a school



MR. DANJURO AS "*LADY OF KASUGA*"



MR. DANJURO AS "*[illegible]*"



MADAME SADA YACCO (*p.* 67)



MR. OBOJIRO KAWAKAMI (*p.*

FAMOUS JAPANESE PLAYERS

which bears some resemblance to the Théâtre Libre or the Théâtre de l'Œuvre. The *sōshi* were students, desirous of reforming and modernising the conservative traditions of their stage, and Mr. Kawakami's contributions to the movement consisted of two plays: a realistic piece, founded on the war with China, which brought him great profit and renown, and an adaptation of "Round the World in Eighty Days." As an actor he is certainly free from the painful mannerisms of the older generation: his elocution is more even, his action more quiet and sudden, his facial expression less exaggerated. As for Sada Yacco, who braved the public opinion of her countrywomen by being the first of her sex to act in company with masculine comrades, her presence would be an acquisition to any stage. Until three years ago she was a geisha, and thus combines with much physical attraction of voice and face the secret of supremely graceful movement. Her dances were revelations of the witchery of Salome's art. Her histrionic powers are not less remarkable.

The pieces selected for representation were of course wholly Japanese in subject and sentiment, but, being greatly modified to suit the supposed infirmities of foreign playgoers, they scarcely gave a correct impression of the average Japanese play. To begin with, that the sound of a strange language might not grow wearisome, the dialogue was ruthlessly cut and curtailed; next, as much dancing as possible was introduced, so that the *damari*, or pantomimic scene, which in Tōkyō is more or less of the nature of "comic relief," sandwiched between exciting incidents, almost became the staple of the play. Finally, the co-incidental music, which strikes so oddly on European ears, was kept within wise limits. But, so far from

blaming Mr. Kawakami for these alterations, it is evident that he erred on the right side, and that we should thank him for lopping away several excrescences which disfigure the drama of his native land.

"Zingoro, an Earnest Statue Carver," narrates the pretty legend of Pygmalion and Galatea, with the addition of a jealous wife. Galatea is a famous geisha, of whom Zingoro carves a statue and falls in love with his own handiwork. The transformation from wood to womanhood is familiar; one has seen it in "Niobe," in "La Poupée," in "Pygmalion and Galatea," but here it is accomplished by a fanciful piece of satire. "Mirror is the spirit of woman," says the proverb, and the sculptor has merely to slip a *kagami* into the bosom of his feminine figure, whom vanity at once stirs to life. Zingoro's delighted astonishment and the doll's awakening consciousness are vividly portrayed, culminating in a mimetic dance, in which Galatea copies all her maker's movements. But the climax is reached when the jealous wife enters, and, seeking to reach her rival, is arrested by the simultaneous animation of the God of Thunder, the Carpenter, the Spearman, and the Dwarf, who had up to that moment remained so motionless that most of the audience believed them to be lay-figures. I fancy none but Oriental actors could have achieved this *coup de théâtre*, involving the strain of prolonged muscular tension in attitudes of fantastic violence.

Muscular feats were also prominent, too prominent, in "Kojima Takanori" or "The Loyalist." This historical drama, which should have occupied three hours, and was compressed into half-an-hour, is founded on a famous instance of feudal loyalty. In the beginning of the thirteenth century Yoshitoki, the

chief of the Hôjô family, acquired supreme power under the title of Shikken (minister of the Shōgun or commander-in-chief), and banished three emperors to the little island of Oki. One of these, the Emperor Godaigo, was passing through Inosha on his way to exile, when Takanori, a faithful knight, learned of his arrival, and, having adopted the disguise of a straw rain-coat and hat, taken by force from two peasants, hid himself in the royal garden. There, since even his prodigious valour was unequal to the task of rescuing his sovereign from Yoshitoki's guards, he resolved at least to furnish consolation by an act of graceful chivalry. Planing the bark of a cherry-tree with his sword, he painted on it with his writing-brush the well-known words of an ancient poem, signifying "While I live, you reign." The soldiers of the Shikken discovered and attacked him, but suffered an inglorious repulse. Then, as a supreme reward, the bamboo blind of the adjoining villa being lifted for a moment, the Mikado smiled gratefully on his brave adherent, who, touched to the heart, succumbed to happy tears.

This poetic and passionate loyalty, so strangely transported to Notting Hill, was admirably embodied by Mr. Kawakami. Alternately fierce and pensive, agile and immobile, he played the part of Takanori with such force and feeling, that *yamato-damashii*, the fervent temper of Japanese chivalry, lived and moved before us, a visibly realised ideal. I fear, however, that for most of us the serious side of the play was marred by terrific, perpetual fighting. It cannot be doubted that, in days when bows and arrows, swords and spears, were the only weapons, men were capable of extraordinary, acrobatic, hand-to-hand encounters.

An American critic, who studied this feature of the acting from the point of view of a professional pugilist, was astounded by the number of throws, lifts, and twists employed, in addition to those tricks peculiar to *jūjutsu*, which other races have yet to learn. But the clash of sparkling swords and the thud of falling bodies were so incessant, that one was apt to lose sight of the ferocious realism, and notice only the comic surprises of this partly historical, partly conventional *mêlée*. To one irreverent lady it suggested the idea of furious grasshoppers battling on the slopes of Fuji.

The last play, written by Mr. Kawakami himself about ten years ago—"The Geisha and the Knight"—is dramatically the best as well as the most picturesque. It furnishes Madame Sada Yacco with a part which affords full scope for her talents. It proves her not only an ethereal dancer, but a tragic actress of real power. When the curtain rises we are in the Yoshiwara of Yedo (euphemistically termed the geisha-quarter), with its line of cherry-trees in full blossom between the fifty tea-houses, with the bustling crowd of domestics, minstrels, dancing-girls, and *samurai*, conventionally disguised, as a knight was bound to be, by *amigasa*, or large braided hats. Katsuragi, the famous courtesan, attended by her little bevy of servants, passes in gorgeous apparel on those high, black-lacquered *sabots* which only the *taiyu* might wear. Soon a quarrel bursts out between her rival suitors, and Banza, determined to provoke a duel, inflicts on Nagoya the disgraceful insult of *sayâte*, a blow on the sword from a sword's hilt. But scarcely has the fight begun when the girl throws herself between and compels her lover to desist.

The second act passes in a Buddhist temple, where Nagoya, flying with his *fiancée*, Orikime, from the jealous and abandoned beauty, has taken refuge. But Katsuragi, well knowing that no woman may enter there alone, yet tries to cajole the genial priests by the pretence of dancing in honour of Buddha. Permission is given. First she treads a solemn temple-dance, a *no-mai*, wearing the golden mitre of a mediæval geisha; then, as the jocular monks relent and even mimic her, she performs dance after dance. A child, she trips through the ball-dance (*maru-odori*), chasing and tossing an imaginary ball with nimble gaiety; a woman, she personates the cherry-blossom, and, crowned with a floral emblem, while red flames of flowers unroll from her hands, she stoops and sways like a bough in May; a priestess of Inari, the rice-goddess, with upturned hands and conical drum she depicts the terror of the goblin-fox in a *pas de fascination* woven of strange swift rushes and sudden turns. But all her wiles are useless. The monks roughly repulse her when she attempts to enter the temple itself. But Katsuragi is not to be baulked. Suddenly she flies through the gate and as suddenly reappears, driving before her the hapless Orikime, whom she batters down with the huge striker of the temple-bell. At this moment, with bare arms and dishevelled hair, she thrills and dominates the audience: the fairy has become a fury; the comedy is at once attuned by this tragic figure to ghastly seriousness. A priest aims a blow at her, but Nagoya arrives in time to ward it off, and, panting, frenzied by conflicting passions, she sinks dying in her lover's arms.

A fourth play was subsequently added, which I had not the good fortune to see; but from the foregoing

descriptions it will be evident that Mr. Kawakami brought us, if not entire plays, at any rate authentic glimpses of the unfamiliar world in which Japanese playgoers delight. It is an ingenious, palpitating world, richly stored with action and sentiment and lit with many cross-lights of allusive fancy. There is so much *naïf* and childish joy in it, so many pretty and grotesque details, that one easily is diverted by these from the consideration of its deeper aspects. Both are better comprehended by a retrospective glance at theatrical history.

It is rather interesting to observe that national drama began its career in England and Japan at about the same time. In 1575 Okuni, the pretty priestess who ran away from the Kizuki temple in Izumo with Nagoya Sanzaburō, and made her peace with the god Ōnamuji by devoting part of the receipts to repairing his shrine, gave her first theatrical performance at Kyōto. In 1576 "the Earl of Leicester's servants" erected the first public theatre in Blackfriars. The times were dramatic, and the excitement of foreign adventure quickened the impulse of the masses towards a more turbulent form of art than religious plays. The Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588, and in 1592 Hideyoshi's armada set sail for the conquest of Corea. The dramatists were men of similar stamp. Just as Greene and Marlowe were reckless rebels against tradition and convention, so Chikamatsu was a *rōnin*, or disgraced *samurai*, too headstrong to endure feudal discipline. Small wonder, then, that their plays were full of "coarse horrors and vulgar blood-shedding." Independence of Christian "Mysteries" and Buddhist *Nō* was a marked characteristic of the secular humanistic drama, but whereas England had not long

to wait for a Shakespeare, the fifty odd five-act pieces of Chikamatsu were written between 1690 and 1724.

Moreover, they were written for marionettes. This fact explains many surviving customs, which hamper theatrical representation to the present day. Although the thread of poetical narrative, on which spectacular episodes were strung, is much attenuated, the chorus, charged with reciting it to musical accompaniment, is not yet banished from a cage or stage-box behind the footlights to the right of the audience. Many actors retain the stiff, jerky motions of the wire-pulled dolls which they were formerly taught to imitate, and whereas the words through artificial declamation are often difficult to follow, more persistent appeal is made to the eye than the ear by pose and gesture. Why the dramatist should have preferred wooden to human puppets is hard to say, unless it be that they were capable of more amazing contortions, for acrobatic activity plays a large part in legitimate drama, which would seem incomplete without *damari*, or pantomimic scenes.

Chikamatsu was followed by Takeda Izumo, who reduced the function of the chorus, and thus lessened the opportunity for literary display. In both writers you find sensational plots, surcharged with incident and developed in daring disregard of probability. While the marionettes' theatre at Ōsaka was thus served, the men's theatre at Yedo was provided with pieces of a similar character with regard to substance, though the style was colloquial and the dialogue largely invented by the actors. Since the eighteenth century it may be said without injustice that the *kabuki-shibai* (popular theatre) has remained stationary. Certain improvements in histrionic and scenic matters have

been introduced, but no development in construction and character-drawing, as we understand those terms, no change in the peculiar ethical and feudal teachings of the Yedo period, has supervened. Enter a Tōkyō theatre to-day, and you will find yourself in old Japan, among resplendent monsters, whose actions violate our moral sense, yet exhibit a high and stern morality by no means out-moded through the advent of modern ideas.

Beauty and duty are the hall-marks that stamp as authentic the plays which delight and instruct the Japanese. A race of artists, they expect and obtain such stage-pictures as no other stage affords. To watch act after act of their spectacular tragedies is like looking through a portfolio of their best colour-prints. One revels in the rich series of glowing hues, flowing lines, majestic contours. And, whereas in a play by Shakespeare or Molière, however sumptuously mounted, the European actor often spoils the picture by inability to wear the garb and adopt the gait of more ceremonious ages, becoming a vociferous fashion-plate, a strenuous caricature, the Oriental actor never does so. He has not been forced to acquire, having never lost, the dignified movements proper to more deliberate dress. His pictorial charm is enhanced by his faculty of sublime repose. Fidgety "supers" are unknown. Moreover, visible beauty, of which the credit may be shared between costumier and stage-manager, is supplemented by the invisible beauty of ideas. The author can give free rein to fancy. Dragons and demons, ogres and magicians, will not be wasted on prosaic pittites, who starve their imagination by feeding it once a year on vulgarised pantomime, because to them music-hall ditties are more congenial

than a midsummer-night's dream His audience would just as soon hear a fairy-story as a love-story. When "The Tongue-cut Sparrow" or "The Fisher-Boy of Urashima" is presented, the adults are quite as appreciative as the children. Perhaps this imaginative audience is too complaisant. It ignores the cloaked attendants, who creep about the stage to remove "properties" or in other ways assist the actors, because it knows that their black garments denote invisibility and is much too polite to perceive them. The same readiness to meet illusion half-way is shown by the retention of the *hana-michi* or flower-walks, two inclined platforms which slope from the stage to the back of the auditorium, trisecting the pit and enabling the actors to make their entry or exit through the midst of the spectators. On the other hand, they facilitate the execution of processional and recessional effects.

After all, the aim of Eastern art is not illusion, but edification. However clear the call of beauty, duty's voice is louder still—duty, not as we Westerns conceive it, a half-hearted compromise between our own interests and those of others, but complete moral and mental suicide. No lesson was more impressively preached to the people by the dramatists in hundreds of historical plays than the duty of obedience at any price. Iyeyasu had established a *pax japonica*, a golden age, in which there was no war, but a rigid system of caste upon caste: obedience was the cement which held the whole together. The cultivated *samurai* were not allowed to enter the theatre, but the masses were melted to tears and heated to transports of patriotic subservience by the representation of heroic self-sacrifice. As a political instrument the Greek Church is not more useful to the

Czar for indoctrinating docile peasants than the Yedo drama was of service to the Shōgun.

One of the most admired examples of unscrupulous virtue is Nakamitsu, applauded in 1898, as in 1598, for the same hero holds the stage for centuries. This is the story of Nakamitsu. His feudal lord, Manju, had confided a reprobate son, named Bijomaru, to his care, in the hope that a *samurai's* control would prove more efficacious than a priest's; but, as Bijomaru continued to "indulge in all sorts of wild sports, sometimes going so far as to kill innocent common people," Nakamitsu was ordered to put him to death. Instead of doing so, he beheaded his own son, Kojumaru, and took the head to his master, who, believing in his fidelity, refused to inspect it. Years afterwards, when Bijomaru has become an irreproachable priest, he is restored to his father, who forgives Nakamitsu for disobeying him and rewards his self-sacrifice with the gift of an adopted son and an extensive tract of land. Now, the moral of this story to us appears atrocious, that a father may murder his son to oblige his general, but a little reflection will show that the Jewish legend of the interrupted sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, though similar, is less heroic. For Nakamitsu's act was voluntary, and his son, eager to be sacrificed on the altar of duty, welcomed death, while Manju had not demanded such cruel fidelity.

A typical instance of the teaching and technique of popular plays is furnished by "Ichi-no-tani Futaba-gunki" ("The Tale of the Sapling of Ichi-no-tani"), produced with exceptional splendour and a first-rate cast—both Danjuro and Kikugoro, leading Japanese actors, were included—at the chief Tōkyō theatre in the autumn of 1898. The incident, more or less

historical, on which it is founded, is simple enough. During the great civil war between the Taira and Minamoto clans in the twelfth century, a Minamoto general, Kumagaya, is said to have been so touched by the likeness to his own son of a youthful adversary, named Atsumori, that he spared his life and connived at his escape from the battle of Ichi-no-tani, a famous valley near Kobe. This theme had to be embroidered with improbable episodes and extravagant actions to satisfy public taste. Accordingly, Kumagaya saves Atsumori's life in a supremely sensational manner. In obedience to secret orders from his feudal lord, Yoshitsune, he induces his son Kojiro to enter Atsumori's castle by cutting down a score of guards single-handed, to change clothes with Atsumori, to personate Atsumori so as to deceive both friend and foe, and finally to be killed by his own father in single combat, that the world may be absolutely convinced of Atsumori's death. While the plot requires that most of the characters in the piece should be mystified, it is important that the audience should not be mystified, and this twofold object is secured by the ingenious co-operation of stage and cage. While father and son, mounted on terrific black and white chargers, interchange threats and insults so as to blind their fellow-actors, the chorus expresses their real feelings of anguish and affection in such pathetic strains that the audience cannot fail to grasp the situation. But concealment of the truth from the other characters leads to more entanglements. Atsumori's mother, the Lady Wistaria, believing her son to be dead, pays a visit to the murderer's wife, and discovering in her a feudal dependent, insinuates that her obvious duty is to assist in her husband's assassination when he shall return.

When Kumagaya comes home, his position, between the woman who thinks he has killed her son and the woman whose son he has really killed, is made more embarrassing by the fact that Kajiwara, an enemy who suspects the truth, is listening at the door. His fluent and inconsistent explanations would be superfluous if he might show the dead man's head, which he carries with him in a box; but that must, of course, only be revealed at the last moment to Yoshitsune as a proof of his loyal obedience, when he will be praised for his loyal devotion and retire to a Buddhist monastery, muttering "Life is a hollow dream." The piece is a great deal more complicated than might be supposed from the foregoing analysis. Subsidiary peasants, beggars, and woodcutters turn out at opportune moments to be Taira or Minamoto warriors and court-ladies in disguise. The first three acts are occupied with a kind of prologue, which has only two points of contact with the main Atsumori *motif:* first, the characters, though entirely different, belong to the same historic period; and, secondly, their business is also to glorify parental murder.

Casuists have urged that to sacrifice another's life, even though that other be one's own child, is less heroic than to sacrifice oneself. But that, too, is common in the *jidaimono*, or historical plays, which far outnumber the rest in popularity. Not to speak of the forty-seven *rōnin*, whose simultaneous suicide is the subject of more than fifty dramas, and whose venerated tombs at Sengakuji are yet covered with poems and visiting-cards every New Year's Day, I suppose one drama in ten contains a case of *hara-kiri*, or "happy dispatch." The actor writes a letter, generally in blood, to explain why his honour requires self-

slaughter, and then with great deliberation draws a knife across his stomach, until his admirably twitching limbs are covered with gore. At this point the squeamish foreigner is apt to leave the theatre, but the Japanese babies do not blench at blood, and are taught by such sights from their earliest years that superb indifference to death, that supreme attachment to honour, which no other nation displays to the same degree. *Hara-kiri* cannot be approved by utilitarians, but it implies a higher pitch of heroism than you find in a British melodrama, where the hero and villain are probably engaged in selfish rivalry for the hand of the same young woman, and merely differ in the choice of means to gratify the same desire. I find an exquisite instance of Japanese subtlety in the mingled ferocity and devotion of their popular plays, which please at once the devil and the angel cohabiting the human heart. If the devil gloat over blood-shedding, the angel exults in death for an ideal. The devil holds the knife and the angel rams it in. Nor must you suppose that the playgoers who revel in such incidents regard them as part and parcel of an effete morality. Every few years the partisans of Western ethics are startled by similar tragedies. The assassins or would-be assassins of Viscount Mori in 1887, of Count Okuma in 1889, of the Czarevitch in 1891, of Li Hung Chang in 1895, were prepared to pay with their own lives for what they deemed dishonourable concessions to foreigners. The young girl, Yuko Hatakeyama, who cut her throat in expiation of the outrage offered to the Czarevitch; the young wife of Lieutenant Asada, who, learning of his death on the battlefield, slew herself before his portrait, that she might follow him; the forty soldiers, who took their own lives because the Govern-

ment gave up Liaotung at the bidding of Russia, France, and Germany—all these were as widely praised and honoured by their fellow-countrymen as Kumagaya or Nakamitsu.

Next in popularity to the historical are the social plays (*sewamono*), of which the main topic is love. This love, however, has nothing in common with the well-regulated affections which dominate our middle-class comedy from "Our Boys" to "Sweet Lavender," and culminate in the addition of two or three conventional couples to suburban villadom. Domestic happiness having been arranged for most young folk by their elders, neither courtship nor marriage (if the former could be said to exist) presented material for dramatic treatment. The heroine is either a geisha or a courtesan, exposed by her profession to the worst caprice of passion and of fortune. In neither case is she necessarily repulsive or even reprehensible. On the contrary, she is often held up to sympathy as a model of filial devotion, having sold her virtue for a certain period to save her parents from beggary. Public opinion is still so much more Confucian than Christian among Japanese peasants, that not only does a father incur no odium for selling his daughter, but she would be regarded in many districts as wickedly unfilial if she objected to be sold. It is true that by decrees added to Japanese law in 1875 and 1896 such sale is forbidden: girls are no longer bought; they are hired. But during the Yedo period, whose morals are mostly reflected in such pieces, the famous *oiran sama* or lady-courtesan was a very dazzling figure, while the humble *jōro* was at least regarded with pity. If we put aside for the moment Western feeling on this subject, it is clear that no romance could be more

deeply pathetic than that of a duteous heart fluttering behind the gilded bars of self-imposed shame and responding to the generous affection of a liberating lover. The *entourage* of spies and gaolers made escape no easy thing: thus plenty of dangerous adventure would diversify the plot. The nimble-witted theatre-goer loves intrigue, and follows hero and heroine through an imbroglio of ruses and disguises and machinations which it would be tedious to describe. Again let me pay tribute to the ingenuity of the didactic dramatist, who illustrates a lesson in filial unselfishness with pictures of attractive wickedness. Few scenes could surpass in beauty the luxurious lupanar, with its troop of richly robed Delilahs. Drury Lane has produced nothing more spectacular or more sensational than the meretricious, murderous dramas of this class.

Less numerous, but of great interest to the student, are *Oikemono,* or plays "connected with the private troubles of some illustrious family." These would obviously strengthen feudal ties, and some have considerable merit. The first piece I saw in a Japanese theatre was founded on the legend (told at length in Mr. Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan") of the Nabeshima cat. One of the lords of Nabeshima had the misfortune to marry a species of vampire-cat, or rather his wife was possessed by one. While the daimyō and his friends keep watch, the wife retires to bed, and soon the shadow of a cat's head is silhouetted on the paper lantern near her couch. Caterwauling is heard: the watchers, armed with swords, rush in and stab the cat-wife, whose death ends the play. Life in the court of a feudal lord during the Tokugawa shogunate is most vividly portrayed in "Kagamiyama-kokyo-no-nishiki," which may be regarded as the Japanese

counterpart of Scribe's "Bataille de Femmes," except that the ruling passion is not love, but loyalty. It deals with a feud between two court ladies. Iwafugi, old and ugly, is jealous of the favour extended to Onoye by the daimyō's daughter, who has entrusted to her care a consecrated statue of Buddha and a box of precious perfume. Having caused these to be stolen and concealed with a straw-sandal of her own, Iwafugi accuses her young rival of trying to fasten the theft upon her, strikes her in the face with the sandal, and leaves the mortified Onoye no remedy for insult but suicide. But Ohatsu, a devoted maid of the latter, avenges her mistress by stabbing Iwafugi to death, and is rewarded with promotion to high rank. Thus the supreme merit of loyalty at any cost is once more vindicated. This piece is interesting, because it furnishes the veteran actor, Danjuro, with a striking female part—that of Iwafugi—and proves that the subjection of women in domestic matters by no means robbed them of spirit and individuality. The rash inference that Confucian domesticity must reduce women to the level of a slave or a doll is disproved by the heroic figures which are so frequent in historical, social, and court-family drama.

Such, then, is the popular play, dear to both actors and public, who value Western imports of a material kind, but prefer their own moral and social ideals to those of foreigners. Railways and ironclads may be readily adopted, but not the New Testament or the New Woman. Yet, setting such vexed questions aside, and taking the neutral ground of art, it is clear that the pieces which I have described are inferior even to the archaic *Nō*. Let them be as imaginative, as patriotic, as lofty as you like, they remain stirring

spectacles, without cohesion, depth, or unity. They are fascinating pictures of a deeply loved and daily vanishing past, but drama of a high sort they are not. Is there no movement, it will be asked, among the more educated classes to raise the standard of art, to create a drama which shall appeal less to the eye and more to the intelligence?

Yes; there are two forces at work which deserve credit for their energy in what is almost an impossible task until the conditions of theatrical representation shall be radically altered. How is the action to be compressed within reasonable limits when the audience demand a whole day's entertainment? How is closer realism to be achieved by the actor when the never silent orchestra compels him to pitch his voice in a falsetto key? How are women's parts to be adequately rendered so long as men monopolise the stage? How are women to take their places when the size of the theatre and the length of the performance put a prohibitive strain on their physical powers? And how is the author to complete a masterpiece when manager, actor, and musician claim the right to interpolate scenes, business, and melody for the irrelevant amusement of the uncritical? These questions must be answered before reform can make headway. In the meantime, a glance at what reformers have tried to accomplish is only due to their laudable endeavour.

Rather more than ten years ago, when enthusiasm for Western things was at its height, a species of independent theatre, calling itself the Sōshi-Shibai, was started with a loud flourish of trumpets in Tōkyō. The promoters were *sōshi* (ex-students), who, as actors or authors, or both, proclaimed their intention of revolutionising the stage and informing it with nine-

teenth-century culture. They began, as such societies generally begin, with translations, and by dramatising the romances of the elder Dumas succeeded for a time in attracting. "The Three Musketeers" and "Monte Cristo" were spectacular enough to please. But when it came to producing original work, their will was found to exceed their capacity. Without enough money or experience to make a sustained effort, they kindled a flame which soon flickered out. Mr. Kawakami, as I have already stated, won a great success by dramatising the more striking incidents of the war with China. He visited Port Arthur and supplied himself with photographs of many varieties, so that, at any rate, his play was realistically mounted. How far its structure was in advance of less up-to-date pieces I cannot say. If it at all resembled his adaptation of "Round the World in Eighty Days," I fear it was no more than a series of tableaux. But no production on strictly European lines could command an intelligent, much less a sympathetic, reception from playgoers unacquainted with European life. In the summer of 1898 Mr. Osada, whose models are Parisian, presented his compatriots with a version of "Le monde où l'on s'ennuie." It will be remembered that the climax of that amusing comedy is reached when a young diplomat is discovered kissing his wife in a dark conservatory by the scandalised guests at a French château. Now, the Tōkyō tradesman has never kissed anybody, and would not incommode his wife with sentimental attention. He was merely mystified by this queer illustration of barbarian habit, and returned with relief to the contemplation of his politely blood-stained ancestors.

The most promising path of improvement would

seem to be that pursued by Mr. Tsuboüchi and Mr. Fukuchi, who continue to write plays on episodes in their own history, but strive to avoid the extravagance and unreality of their predecessors. Mr. Tsuboüchi, who was well known as a critic and novelist before he turned playwright, invented the term *mugen-gekki* or "dream-play" in ridicule of such wildly improbable incidents as disfigure "The Tale of the Sapling of Ichi-no-tani." I have not seen his own drama, the "Maki no Kati" (1897), which deals with the turbulent thirteenth century, but Mr. Aston discerns in it "careful workmanship and gratifying freedom from extravagance," in spite of "several murders and two *hara-kiri* by women." Of Mr. Fukuchi's work I can write with some confidence, having been privileged on many occasions to discuss it with him. He is recognised as the leading Japanese playwright, and has produced about thirty plays during the last ten years. He has been engaged for some time on translations of "Hamlet" and "Othello," but has no idea of staging them, for reasons which will be presently explained. Though anxious to modernise the drama by introducing less bloodshed and more careful study of character, he finds modern Japan unsuited to dramatic treatment. The typical advocate of progress, who dresses and talks like a foreigner, takes little interest in his own arts and antiquities, being absorbed in politics or money-making. He has neither the picturesque nor heroic qualities which a dramatist postulates, and is therefore rejected by Mr. Fukuchi in his search for material. A serious obstacle to reform lies in the ignorance of actors and the indifference of the upper classes. While the former too often lack the erudition to appreciate and

interpret a scholarly reproduction of antique habit and speech, the latter are only beginning to discard their aristocratic prejudice against the theatre, compelling the author to write down to the level of his middle and lower class audience. But better education and more democratic ideals are beginning to tell. The reception of "Kasuga-no-Tsubone" ("The Lady-in-Waiting of Kasuga")—one of Mr. Fukuchi's finest plays—marked a most creditable advance in public judgment.

Here was a piece entirely devoid of sensational incident, depending on neither love nor death nor abnormal sacrifice for its appeal, but narrating the discharge of public duty by a high-spirited woman in the face of ceaseless intrigue and danger. It brings out the noblest side of Japanese statesmanship, the far-seeing wisdom and patience of the ruler, together with the perseverance and devotion of the ruled. The political and personal strands of interest are so cleverly combined, that for once the grey fabric of governmental policy is sufficiently embroidered with a pattern in gold of intersecting character: the scarlet thread is scarcely missed. Briefly this is the tale. Iyeyasu, having completed his work of equipping Japan with a durable constitution, retired to Suruga, and, leaving the shōgunate in Hidetada's hands, continued to take private measures for the future welfare of the State. One of these was the education of his grandson, Taketiyo (better known as Iyemitsu), whom he wished to be trained in the severest school of military discipline. For this purpose he chose the Lady of Kasuga, whose husband, Inaba Sado-no-Kami, was a *rōnin*, having been dispossessed of title and estates by Hideyoshi. The task was beset with difficulty. First the wife of Hidetada, and then that Shōgun himself, lost no

occasion of thwarting her efforts and of putting forward Kunityo, a younger prince, whose gentler and more refined manner gained him many partisans at Court. In despair of winning her cause, the Lady of Kasuga fled to Suruga in the garb of a pilgrim and begged Iyeyasu to decide between the rival candidates. The old man thereupon returned to Yedo and subjected the brothers to searching tests of both intellectual and physical capacity. In all these the more Spartan pupil of the *samurai's* wife proved victorious. Up to this point the plot does not differ very materially from ordinary histories of disputed succession, but the last act is peculiarly illustrative of woman's status during the Tokugawa *régime*. Asked to choose her own reward for service so admirably rendered, the preceptress of Iyemitsu solicits the restoration to her husband of his rank and estates; but he, regarding such a proposal as wounding to his honour, proceeds to divorce her. Iyeyasu then offers to make the wife a daimyō, but she refuses, on the ground that to accept would be to still further dishonour her husband. In the end Inaba is reinstated for having exhibited a proper spirit of pride and independence, while the Lady of Kasuga resumes her place at his side.

On the lines of this play, in which conflict of scheming interests is substituted for hand-to-hand fighting, while a clearly developed story replaces the old *olla podrida* of loosely connected scenes, there is great hope of raising popular drama from a somewhat crude condition to the level of serious art. It has never aimed at merely amusing the populace; it has always professed to instruct them. In the hands of Mr. Fukuchi and men of his stamp its patriotic bias need not be weakened, while its artistic worth will be

much increased. But it is by no means likely that European drama will affect its substance, however largely it may influence the form. On this point Mr. Fukuchi is as emphatic as Mr. Danjuro. Shakespeare is impossible. His teaching would be at least as pernicious in its effect on feminine morals and the structure of society as that of Ibsen is considered by conservative moralists in this country. We have seen that the restriction of woman's sphere to loving and serving does not necessarily rob her of courage or resolution. Many foreigners resident in Japan have not hesitated to declare their conviction that the "childish, confiding, sweet Japanese girl" is superior to the "calculating, penetrating, diamond-hard American woman," the consequence and nemesis of masculine idolatry. A little reflection will show how shocking the heroines of Shakespeare must seem to admirers of the former type. You have Rosalind, swaggering shamelessly in male attire; Beatrice, cutting such coarse quips as Benedick himself would scarcely venture upon to-day in a London club; Portia, masquerading in cap and gown, and exposing her lover to dishonour by snatching his betrothal-ring; Juliet and Jessica, selfishly disregardful of their parents' wishes; and Katherine the shrew, whose violent vulgarity fortunately could not be translated into so polite a language as Japanese. As for "The Merry Wives of Windsor," should the Sōshi-Shibai ever dare to present it, I feel sure that the Tōkyō counterpart of Mr. Clement Scott would denounce their action in such terms as these:

"This disgusting representation of the most loathsome of all Shakespeare's plays was unutterably offensive. So foul a concoction ought never to have been

allowed to disgrace the boards of a Japanese theatre. The lewd maunderings of Sir John Falstaff, the licentious jesting of Mistress Ford, Mistress Page, and Mistress Quickly must excite reprobation in all but those lovers of prurience and dabblers in impropriety who are eager to gratify their illicit tastes under the pretence of art. Ninety-seven per cent. of the people who laughed to see the fat knight smothered in a basket of dirty linen are nasty-minded people. Outside a silly clique there is not the slightest interest in the Elizabethan humbug or all his works."

## II

MANY foreigners, unable to catch the meaning of what is to them a rather tedious dumb-show, pay short and perfunctory visits to the theatre. But this is not wise, for, even should the play lie outside their comprehension, the native playgoers are both affable to accost and interesting to study. They are seated in lidless boxes lined with matting, in parties of four and five, on the ground, on slightly elevated seats at the side, or in a long gallery surrounding the house. A box in the first position will cost about eight shillings, in the second about nine, in the last eleven. The higher you climb the more you pay, except in the *Oikomi* ("driven-in-place"), where the "gods" are crowded together in a grated pen, from which little can be seen or heard; but then the price is no more than sixpence, or a penny an act if they cannot afford to witness the whole performance. This will consist of two long plays lasting about four hours each, with an intermediary tableau, which is generally the most beautifully mounted of all. During the day every one eats and drinks and smokes. The women take tea, the men *saké*, while the babies loudly and numerously imbibe milk. Between the acts, when the handsome

curtains (often gifts from admiring associations to a popular artist) descend, the audience strolls about the *undoba*, a large enclosure surrounding the theatre, in which the stall-keepers sell refreshments, photographs, toys, and all kinds of ornamental knick-knacks. You escape the headache engendered by the gas and close atmosphere of a Western play-house, for the sliding shutters that form the outer walls of the upper storey can be opened at will to admit currents of cool air. The best day to go is Monday, for that is the pay-day of the geisha, whom you will see in almost as many costumes as the actor, since she loves to return to an adjacent tea-house at frequent intervals for the purpose of renewing her charms of apparel and complexion.

Tea-houses surround a theatre as jackals a lion; their co-operation is indispensable to the success of an indoor picnic. Besides, it is not considered genteel to apply for seats at the door. Your only chance of a good place is to secure the kind offices of a tea-house proprietor, who will provide attendance and refreshments, besides taking charge of your watch, purse, and any other article of value. The Tōkyō pickpocket is very adroit, and a constant patron of dramatic art. Formerly the entertainment began at dawn, but the Government, which exercises paternal supervision over popular amusements, has now limited its length to eight or nine hours, so that, if you arrive at half-past ten, you may be sure of seeing the programme played out until seven or eight in the evening. Having left your shoes at the tea-house in exchange for a wooden check and sandals, you will be conducted to a box and presented by a polite attendant with cushion, programme, tobacco-box, tea, and sweet

cakes, with luncheon to follow. Now, at last, you are at liberty to observe the antics of the actors.

As you cannot understand what they say, you notice more particularly how they say it. At first their elocution will seem both painful and artificial: the tones are too shrill or too gruff, equally removed from the diapason of natural speech. But that is because the traditional *samisen*, a three-stringed guitar, follows the performer like a curse from start to finish. Unless he pitched his voice above or below its notes, he could not be heard. Even so, the author complains that his words receive inadequate attention from either player or playgoer, for the former relies chiefly on pose and facial expression to score his points, while the latter obediently admires the methods of acting to which he has always been accustomed. It cannot be denied that these methods are effective. I have seen the feminine part of the audience infected with such violent emotion by the agonised play of mobile features as to rush for relief to the "Tear-Room," where they can cry to heart's content without inconveniencing more stoical neighbours.

Though the actor's tone is disagreeably unnatural, his articulation is both clean-cut and sonorous. The syllables crack on the ear like pistol-shots, sharply distinct. I imagine that he is seldom inaudible. It is a great pity that convention, if not law, still forbids the appearance of men and women on the same stage, since the mimicry of one sex by the other, triumphantly deceptive in other particulars, breaks down at the point of vocal imitation. The eye is tricked, but not the ear. Yet peculiar attention is given to the training and discipline of *onnagata*, or impersonators of female parts. Formerly they were not only given the

outward semblance of women by every contrivance which the costumier and coiffeur could supply, but were required to spend their lives from childhood in feminine costume and society, that their masculine proclivities might be as far as possible obliterated. Even now their names stand first on the programme, their dressing-rooms are locked on the inside, their influence is paramount in the Actors' Guild. The supremacy of Mr. Danjuro is due in no small degree to his ability to play both male and female characters with equal *éclat*. Notwithstanding every precaution and privilege, the actor cannot acquire the intonation of an actress. His reedy falsetto is a poor parody of the musical tones in which Japanese women converse, and the loss to a public which has never been caressed by Sara Bernhardt's golden voice or thrilled by Mrs. Patrick Campbell's may be sympathetically imagined. But, though Tōkyō has no actresses, the Women's Theatre in Kyōto, in which are no actors, might seem a partial set-off to this deficiency. In fact, however, though the women are extremely clever in simulating the gait and gestures of men—if I had not been taken behind the scenes, I should have believed myself in the wrong theatre—they are hopelessly handicapped by physical weakness. The stage is so enormous, and the performance so long, that an artist may reckon on walking ten miles in the course of the day, while the voice is severely taxed by the prolonged stridency of declamation.

While the stage-woman, adroitly personated, is often tolerable, the stage-child is an intolerable infliction. Convention has decreed that it shall shriek all its lines on one high monotonous note, and shriek it does. There is no attempt at variety of tone

or naturalness of expression. When a steam-launch emits similar sounds, we condone in a machine what we resent in a human being. It is simply an ear-splitting automaton. One turns with relief to watch the children in the audience, who are evidently the spoiled darlings of their relations. But, indeed, the child seems never snubbed or thwarted in Japan. At the termination of every act, while the curtains fall or are drawn together, there is a scurry of tiny feet up and down the parallel *hana-michi* (the flower-walks which divide the auditorium), and, if some audacious little intruders rush upon the stage itself, they are greeted with indulgent laughter.

Perhaps the chief obstacle to illusion, and the one most easily remedied as regards scenic accessories, is the enormous area of the stage. It is far too large to be enclosed between "wings" and "flies," while the custom of exit and entry along the flower-walks transgresses our cardinal principle of separating those who act from those who look on. As a rule, the supposed locality of the piece, be it palace or temple or battle-field, is a wood-and-cardboard island in a sea of bare boards, of which the circumference nearly corresponds with that of a revolving section of the stage, twenty or thirty feet in diameter, which turns on lignum-vitæ wheels. While one scene is being enacted, a second is being prepared behind, and at a given signal, the *eccyclema* is whirled round, carrying away one set of actors and bringing on their successors. Do not suppose, however, that realistic effects are outside the range of the Meiji-za or Kabuki-za management. I remember a melodrama, written by a lieutenant in the Japanese navy, in which the hero, though encumbered by a heavy piece of ord-

nance hoisted on his shoulders, cut down eight assailants in turn in spite of a terrific storm, which drenched the company with real rain and blew down real trees, planted that afternoon!

The actor is a more important personage than the author in most people's eyes. Until this relation shall be reversed, the Thespian cart is not likely to leave the rut in which it moves. Meanwhile, a glance at their respective positions may fitly conclude this essay. Before Meiji, the present era of enlightenment, the mummer was treated as a rogue and vagabond. He was regarded with contempt as a *koyamono*, or "occupant of a hut," and placed on a par with mendicants. In public places he was obliged to wear a *mebakari-zukin* or hood, which covered head and face all but the eyes, and was only allowed to frequent particular restaurants. Unless he belonged to one of the half-dozen theatrical families who ruled the stage with oligarchic exclusiveness, monopolising the secrets of the profession, the power to admit novices, and the right to play particular parts, his progress was slow. Beginning with the horse's leg (*uma no ashi*), a limb of the pantomimic charger, which was indispensable to historic drama, he was obliged to buy or insinuate his way by adoption to more important parts before he could earn either fame or fortune. Nowadays all that is changed. Free competition rules. The public is his only patron. Without training or payment of fees to the Ichikawa, the Onoye, or the Nakamura, a successful *débutant* can march by his own merits into wealth and popularity. As he treads the flower-walks, fans, purses, embroidered pouches will be showered at his feet; to his dressing-room will come love-letters innumerable, for the Japanese "matinée girl" is very

susceptible; in public he will be pointed out, the idol of the masses; his crest will be on the tortoise-shell or ivory pin, which adorns the high coiffure of the stage-struck *musumé*; finally, should he ever reach the head of his profession, he may hope to make as much as £5000 in four weeks, far surpassing the modest income of a prime minister or an archbishop.

But the author, instead of ruling the kingdom which he creates, is in most cases no more than a theatrical *employé*. In fact, the term "create" can only be used with much qualification, for the genesis of a play is curiously and multifariously planned. First, the manager sends for the author, and indicates the subject and period which he desires to form the bases of a drama; the author prepares and submits two or three drafts, from which the best is selected; then the cast is appointed, and the chief actors are consulted about their parts, which of course are modified to suit their suggestions; then the composer is called in, and, if the musical setting should lead to new alterations in the libretto, the author has no choice but to submit. When plays have to be constructed in this way, you cannot expect them to have any more artistic value than a London pantomime or "musical comedy." Nor has the author the satisfaction of salving the wounds to "artistic conscience" with consolatory gold. On the first run of a piece (the season is never longer than four or five weeks at a time) he may receive £20; a revival may bring him in £10 more, a provincial tour yet another £10. On the whole, he will be lucky to make £50, while the leading actor makes £5000. But then the audiences do not pay their money for the opportunity of solving historical problems or appreciating intellectual artistry: their object is simply to feast



The Heroine of a Problem-play

eyes and ears on a sensational pageant, in which to them the actor is king. They do not bestow a thought on the power behind the throne, chained there by ignorance and convention. Plays are sometimes published, but their sale is insignificant. The aristocracy, both of birth and intellect, hold too much aloof from a plebeian amusement, which under higher conditions might become a fruitful and immortal art. When I think of Mr. Fukuchi, fettered by public taste, that stupidest of Jupiters, to the Caucasus of picturesque melodrama, while vulturine actors peck at his brains, I wish that a chorus of Oceanides, winged ideas and ideals from Paris, from London, and Christiania—could cross the seas to Tōkyō and liberate Prometheus.

GEISHA AND CHERRY-BLOSSOM

# GEISHA AND CHERRY-BLOSSOM

NOTHING is more difficult to eradicate than a British misconception of foreign defects. French lubricity, German clumsiness, Russian cruelty, are quite as much articles of faith on this side of the Channel as Albion's perfidy on the other. Similarly, it is useless to controvert the popular opinion that the geisha is generally pretty and always improper. Her detractors have seen an English opera bearing her name and traducing her character: it is enough; they know. Nevertheless, this opinion is founded on imperfect knowledge, and requires much modification before it can be received as even partially true. Etymologically, a *gei-sha* is an accomplished person; socially, she is an entertainer, who has been trained from the age of seven or eight to dance or sing for the amusement of guests at a dinner-party. Probably her parents have leased her for a certain number of years to a teacher, who undertakes to board and train her, to procure engagements and to chaperon her, to pay a fixed sum to her family as well as a tax to the Government, in return for all of which a sufficient recompense is assured by the fees which a talented artist is able to earn. Less frequently she lives at home and obtains

engagements through an agent, who receives only a percentage of her gains. The training is continuous and severe. To a foreigner the dancing will appear graceful but monotonous; it has none of the free, vigorous motion which we associate with the term: on the other hand, for the connoisseur each gesture is significant, each pose symbolic. To appreciate many of the "dances," requiring hours of patient rehearsal, it would be necessary to catch continual allusion to poems, legends, and flowers, with which the treasure-house of Japanese memory is stored. Those who would deny the applicability of the term "music" to "the strummings and squealings of Orientals," would yet admit that both the *koto* and *samisen* (the stringed instruments most in vogue) are not to be mastered without constant practice, and the irregular rhythm of the songs, with their abrupt intervals and capricious repetitions, cannot be easy to render until the voice has attained extreme flexibility. On the mysteries of Japanese music, however, seeing that the best authorities are at variance, only an expert dare pronounce judgment. To return to the question of the social status of the geisha, I should say that it corresponds more exactly with that of a Parisian actress than of an Athenian *hetaira.* Convention having banished the actress from the Japanese stage, the geisha takes her place as the natural recipient of masculine homage. She is much courted, and sometimes makes a brilliant match. There are a large number who make the profession an excuse for attracting rich admirers, just as the name of "actress" in more Puritan climes will cover a multitude of sins. But a professional courtesan she is not: her favours are not always for sale to the highest

bidder. When her short reign is over at the age of twenty-five, she generally imparts to a younger generation the secrets of professional success. Among these the art of conversation is not the least important. To parry indiscreet advances and to bandy compliments enter as much into her *rôle* as the playing of "Kitsune ken" or "fox-forfeit," in which no little agility is needed to represent at the right moment the fox, the man, and the gun on facile fingers. Childish of course the geisha is, like most of her younger countrywomen; sometimes dangerous and fickle, as her popular nickname of "Nekko," the cat, testifies; but virtuous as well, in many cases, where she has enough independence and strength of character to resist the flattering importunity of fame's innumerable suitors.

If one of these aspire to win her affection, or merely to make her acquaintance, he has many advantages over the callow youths who wait, like lackeys, at the stage-door of a Western theatre. He is spared the preliminary purgatory of appealing letters, of supplicatory presents, which may easily fail to secure the desired access. He is not forced to share with a crowd of jealous or indifferent strangers the bitter joy of her nightly apotheosis, when her smiles and wiles must be lavished in promiscuous appeal. He has merely to dine at the tea-house with which she, or her employer, has made a mutually advantageous contract: there, on sufficient notice, she will arrive with her duenna, ready to perform, if need be, for his delight alone, while the semi-privacy of the entertainment affords him every opportunity of pressing his suit. As a rule, however, the geisha performs in parties of two, or three, or more, according to the number of guests.

Often the convivial character of the occasion tends to lower the standard of art involved; indeed, such feasts are apt to degenerate into orgies. To realise the æsthetic possibilities of an art which is only at its lowest bacchanalian, we must quit the tea-house, that temple of the senses, and seek the sacred city of Kyōto, where palace and monastery raise, like antique junks, their majestic or quaintly carven heads above white waves of cherry-blossom. . . .

It is April. While English weather is struggling in spasmodic furies of wind and rain to escape the clutch of winter, here the enfranchised spring creeps, fairy-like, from plain to height on rosy sandals. First Tōkyō, whose hundred miles of unpaved thoroughfare fatigue the foot and offend the eye with naked dreariness, is clothed with draperies of fleecy pink. The spacious parks of Ueno and Shiba are thronged with gazing multitudes, who ride or saunter all day long through flower-encumbered avenues. At night the river-reaches of Mukōjima are packed with pleasure-boats, whose lanterns gleam like fire-flies beneath the pale mass of overhanging bloom. Yamaguchi San, who by trade is a rice merchant but by nature a poet, has written in the intervals of business, which is not brisk at this time of year, a little sheaf of poems, each consisting of three lines, which run perpendicularly down strips of iridescent rice-paper. So far as their purport can be construed into grosser forms of verse, I take it to be as follows:

"Put on your brightest *kimono*,
O Haru San, and let us go!

"Bring ivory chop-sticks, lacquer-cup,
And rice and wine, that we may sup.

"On honourable trees is set
A rosy-petalled coronet.

"The shine of day, the sheen of night,
Are drowned in cherry-blossom-light.

"We have no need of sun or star
To revel at Mukōjima."

But Mukōjima is no more to be compared with Yoshino than Rosherville with Stonehenge. The trees which line the broad Sumidagawa are beautiful but modern; their festal boughs are familiarised and a little vulgarised by the loud merry-making of cockney crowds; all this shouting and laughing recall a barbarian's bank-holiday. Far westward, on the ridges of Yoshino, where no modern city disturbs the silence of the imperial *tumuli*, encircled by a low granite fence and enclosing dusty gold relics of dead kings, grow the Thousand Cherry-Trees of immemorial renown. Motoöri sang of them; Hiroshigi painted them; Jimmu Tenno, the first of the Mikados, in his mausoleum fifteen miles away, is hardly more venerable than they. Every year pilgrims pass through the bronze gateway of the Zo-o-do Temple and climb the mountain side to rest beneath the canopy of tender, billowy blossom, which broods like an ever-renascent cloud of beauty above the Yamato plain, endeared by thirteen centuries of history and romance. Many pleasure-seekers mix with the white-robed pilgrims, who belong for the most part to distant villages and look on religion as an excellent excuse for change of interest and change of scene. Heedless of theology and harassed by no conviction of original sin, they return, like happy children from a picnic, with eyes brightened by the sea of colour and spirits clarified by pure mountain air.

Soon the green hills are carpeted with flakes of soft flowerage; the brief splendour of the Thousand Trees is over; the scattered hamlets and holy mounds resume their ordinary quietude.

At Kyōto the cult of the national flower culminates in an annual celebration, the Miyako-odori, a spectacular ballet with choric interludes. For many years the same poet, an old resident, has been assigned the task of composing appropriate lyrics, in which the glories of some historic or legendary hero blend with the praises of the blushing *sakura*. Musicians, painters, dancers, are engaged to elaborate with auxiliary sound, design, and movement the series of dream-pictures which his fancy has evoked. But words and notes are really subsidiary to the dancing: the tale of the poet is chiefly told by the winding feet and waving arms, the ever-changing pose and mimicry, of the most highly trained geisha in Japan. These number as many as seventy, of whom eighteen combine the functions of choir and orchestra, now chanting, now accompanying on drum and mandoline the statuesque or processional development of the choregraphic theme. The Hanami-Kōji, specially set apart for such representations, is not easy to find. Though within the precincts of the theatrical quarter, it stands a little apart from the other houses, such as the Gion-za Theatre, and is far less capacious; in fact, it bears about the same proportion to its huge, banner-flaunting brethren as the smaller Queen's Hall to Drury Lane. The structure, too, is entirely different from theirs. Three sides of the building are reserved for the performers. Instead of the parallel *hana-michi*, trisecting the audience and sloping from stage to entrance, two dancing platforms skirt the "pit" on left

and right and join the extremities of the scene: on them sit the singing-girls, concealed at first by cotton curtains. No room remains for the public but the floor between the platforms and a gallery, which faces the drop-scene of the stage proper. As the performance only lasts an hour, it is repeated four or five times in the afternoon and evening of twenty days, and the price of admission to the best (gallery) seats is fifty *sen*, about one shilling, for economy and simplicity are conspicuous in this essentially popular entertainment.

The dance is preceded by a ceremonious reception of great interest to the foreign visitor. He is conducted to an ante-room and requested to participate in *O Cha-no-yu*, an august tea-making. The preparation of this aristocratic refreshment must be conducted in accordance with inviolable rules, invented or rather modified by the great Taikō himself, who, not content with military glory, desired to regulate the boudoir as imperiously as the State, in this resembling Queen Anne, who "would sometimes counsel take and sometimes tea." The twelve utensils employed must be separately cleansed and waved in air by the demure but smart damsel who presides with becoming dignity and science, every gesture, every operation of her deft hands being prescribed by rigid etiquette. After twenty minutes of silent incantation, as it seems, the dainty sorceress has brewed her potion. Then a careful sub-sorceress, who has attentively waited on the principal witch, prostrates herself at the feet of each of the guests, touches the floor with her forehead, and, as she presents a cup of thick, green *bouillon*, murmurs, "Oh, gracious stranger, deign to taste this honourable tea!" Long as the tea ceremonies appear

to the uninitiated, they are considerably shortened and imperfectly observed by the tea-drinkers, who, it is feared, break a thousand and one rules in uncouth efforts to copy the better educated Japanese.

As seen from the strangers' gallery (for the majority of humble coolies and small shopkeepers have been waiting in patient line until the august tea has been absorbed by their betters, and now sit, packed in tiny compartments, on the floor of the pit) this liliputian theatre has much in common with the galanty-show which first kindled a passion for the stage in distant childhood. The drop-scenes are scarcely more than nine feet high, and of such thin material that through their pale pattern of willow and pine the shining of candles is discerned. It would not surprise me if they grew gradually whiter and brighter, serving at last as the medium for a droll shadow-pantomime of fantastic silhouettes. But even the children would not have come to see that, since their eyes have often followed at home the ingenious shadow-play of parental hands behind the paper-panelled *shōji*. Rarer and more exotic must be the show to please this easily amused but quickly sated audience. Suddenly the curtains on either side lift, disclosing to the left nine geisha, holding *taiko* or *tzuzumi*, circular drums and drums conical, beaten with batons or smacked with open palm; to the right, nine more, with *koto* and *samisen*, plucking the strings with curved finger or ivory plectrum: all are much powdered and painted, but soberly attired in black and gold. The prelude lacks melody, lacks harmony, as we understand them, but the sharp, staccato cries, emphasised by drum-taps, the antiphonal, diminishing shrieks, which seem to punctuate a nasal, wailing recitative, insensibly induce

a nervous tension of disquieting suspense. The time is most exact: the drums rattle, the zithers clang, in perfect unison. Then along the narrow platforms in front of the musicians issue simultaneously from beneath the gallery two slender files of geisha, whose pink and blue *kimono* suggest the hues of cherry-blossom and the else cloudless sky. Like running ribbons, they wind towards the stage, festooning at last into a momentary bow before the famous gate, called O Kuruma-yose, of which the curiously carven peonies and phœnixes are admirably reproduced, evoking instant recognition. While the dancers disappear through that pictured portal and the curtain falls on the first figure of the dance, let me briefly indicate the subject and intention of this year's fantasy.

Its hero is Hideyoshi, often entitled Taikō (the retired regent), next to Iyeyasu perhaps the most notable name in all Japanese history—so proverbially notable that Cromwell and Napoleon are not more vividly impressed on the memory of their countrymen. His dramatic rise from rung to rung of the feudal ladder, from peasant's hut to a regent's palace, which none but a noble had occupied before him; the contrast of his mean appearance, which caused him to be dubbed "The Monkey," with his grandiose achievements, which included the commercial supremacy of Ōsaka and the subjugation of Corea; his dreams of world-empire; the patronage of art, which led him to summon a congress of tea-drinkers and to take an active part in the presentation of *Nō* plays; the adroit concentration of power in his own person, despite the jealousy of patricians and the victories of contemporary generals; these and many other circumstances of his career loom large in patriotic tradition. He was

eclipsed by Iyeyasu in statesmanship, for the latter founded a constitution and established a dynasty, which lasted two hundred years, and might have lasted longer but for foreign intervention; yet Hideyoshi's is the more picturesque, the more striking personality. Perhaps it would not be straining an historical parallel to allege that the great soldier of Kyōto prepared the way for the great legislator of Yedo as effectively as Julius Cæsar prepared the way for Augustus. Be this so or not, it is plain that the beginning of the seventeenth century after Christ in Japan and the end of the last century before Christ in Italy coincided with similar transitions from militant anarchy to peaceful despotism. The golden age of the Tokugawa may be cited as an argument for imperial rule with the *pax Romana* of the Cæsars. It might be supposed that the names of Iyeyasu and Hideyoshi have no more virtue as a rallying-cry for their descendants than the watchwords of Roundhead and Cavalier have for us. But such is not the case. Subtly reincarnate in the cities which they glorified in life, their spirits still give battle after death in the bloodless field of civic rivalry. Tōkyō is still Yedo, the Petersburg of the empire, created by a despot's will and the centre of law, of authority, of administration; but it is to Kyōto, as to Moscow, the holy city, that lovers of art and of religion are inevitably attracted. Hers are still the finer temples, the lovelier fabrics, the nobler legacies of Old Japan. One thing, however, she has not, which the capital has—a fitting monument of her greatest citizen. Whereas the mausoleum of Iyeyasu at Nikkō is such a masterpiece of commemorative gratitude, expressed in the language of plastic and decorative art, that "whoever has not seen Nikkō

[so runs the saw] has no right to use the word *kekkō* (splendid)," the conqueror of Corea, the arbiter of august tea-making, lacks the tribute of a monumental tomb. This stain on the scutcheon of Kyōto is to be speedily wiped out. Now that the Emperor has transferred his court to the eastern capital and made the Tokugawa citadel his own, the western merchants are eager to redress the balance by building on the heights of Maruyama for the glory of Hideyoshi and the bewilderment of tourists such a triumph of memorial architecture that Iyeyasu shall at last be outshone and the connotation of *kekkō* be fraught with ampler meaning. The plans are drawn, the work begun, patriots and pilgrims have subscribed thousands of *yen*, the best modern artists in wood and bronze have been charged with the heavy privilege of surpassing their illustrious predecessors. Whether they succeed or not, the Hideyoshi monument was a subject so rich in suggestion, so popular in itself, so complex in its appeal, that the poet of the Miyako-odori could not wish for a better or more burning theme. And that is why the pink-and-blue geisha made their first exit through O Kuruma-yose, which Hidari Jingoro, the immortal left-handed carpenter, adorned with marvellous birds and flowers when commissioned to carve a royal gateway for his master's, the Taikō's, palace at Fushimi.

The next scene represented Hideyoshi's garden. It is no ordinary garden, whatever foreigners may think, who merely see in it an appropriate background for the swaying flower-like bodies of the dancing-girls. It is a masterpiece of the celebrated æsthete, Kobori Enshu, and the artful disposition of lake and lantern, pebble and pine, may symbolise, for all I know, a

divine truth or philosophic precept. My neighbour (a Buddhist neophyte, whose enthusiasm is tempered by erudition) points out to me the Moon-Washing Fountain, the Stone of Ecstatic Contemplation, and the Bridge of the Pillar of the Immortals, but it seems that the exigencies of scenic space have so fatally curtailed the Mound facing the Moon that the exact meaning of the parabolic design is made obscure, if not heretical. It is not in my power to reassure him, so I welcome with relief the reappearance of the dancers, who, bearing flowers in one hand and a fan in the other, step gaily out of the garden and, posing, perching, pirouetting, flutter with deliberate grace through a maze of correlated motions. I do not dare to ask if their gestures point a moral: it is wiser to assume with Keats that "beauty is truth, truth beauty," and to follow with undistracted eye the solemn prettiness of these human dragon-flies. For their gauzy *kimono* sleeves and red-pepper-coloured *obi* recall the wings and hue of a giant dragon-fly, which dominates in its pride of national emblem the principal bridge over the Kamogawa. And, whether they poise flower on fan or fan on flower, or revolve with open fan extended behind their triple-tressed coiffure, they dart here and settle there with almost the unconscious, automatic smoothness of bird or insect. Proximity destroys this illusion. Watched from the subjacent vantage of the floor, the features of these tiny *coryphées* are seen to wear that fixity of resolute attention which few children when engrossed in a performance are able to repress. The art of concealing art is hard to learn. Their elder sisters smile continually behind *taiko* and *samisen*, but the gravity of the childish troupe is more in keeping with the poet's retrospective vision.

I hope the stage-carpenter atoned for his unorthodox abbreviation of Enshu's lesson in landscape by the exquisite view of the monastery of Uji Bridge. Nestling in the lap of pine-forested hills, this ancient temple of Byōdō-in has been for at least six hundred years the protective centre of vast tea-plantations where is grown the finest tea for native taste, called Gyokuro, or Jewelled Dew. But Uji Bridge is famous also for its fire-flies, which on warm nights flash like living jewels beside the stream, to the joy of countless sightseers, eager to catch and cage them. Throughout the ensuing dance many eyes were diverted from the geisha to the sparkling play of emerald motes across the mimic Ujigawa. This time the girls wore kerchiefs such as peasant women wear when, with heads thus guarded and skirts rolled upward to the knee, they toil among the tea-plants. Then, unfolding and waving the kerchiefs, while a soloist intoned a rhapsody in honour of "the Great Councillor, whose memory lives for ever in the fragrant sweetness of the Jewelled Dew," they moved in pairs along the platform, alternately kneeling and rising, with arms extended or intertwined, their gradual retrocession signifying, as I learn, the reluctant withdrawal of summer.

Autumn succeeds. Momiji-Yama, or Maple Mountain, deeply mantled in myriads of reddening leaves, gives the cue to the now melancholy, almost stationary languor of gliding figures: no longer dragon-flies or humming-birds, they drift slowly, one by one, into the crimson gorge, and are lost among the maple-leaves. At this point the floral march of the seasons is abruptly broken, as if to forbid too hasty interpretation, by the fall of tricolour curtains, richly embroidered in scarlet,

blue, and gold with Hideyoshi's crest, the large fan-like leaf of the *Pawlonia Imperialis.*

The five-storeyed pagoda of Omuro Gosho, outlined in snow against the wintry landscape, signalises an ascent from temporal to eternal beauty. To this monastic palace ex-mikados came after abdication; it had no abbots but those of imperial blood. And the next scene, presenting the Daibutsu, or great Buddha of Hideyoshi, is elegantly illustrative of the Buddhist teaching of permanence in transition. The first wooden image, 160 feet high, erected by the Taiko in 1588, was destroyed by earthquake in 1596. After his death his widow constructed a second in bronze, which was almost completed save for the casting of the head when fire devoured it in 1603. Lastly, his son, Hideyori, persuaded by perfidious Ieyaysu to waste his substance in rearing a yet more colossal figure, was forbidden to consecrate it by a message from the Shōgun, who chose to discover in the Chinese inscription on the bell ("On the east I welcome the bright moon, on the west I bid farewell to the setting sun") a prophecy of his own waning and Hideyoshi's waxing radiance. A second earthquake in 1662, corrosive lightnings in 1775 and 1798, consumed successive Buddhas in the same shrine, but the present god, whose gilded head and shoulders alone are visible, scaling fifty-eight feet from ground to ceiling, has defied the strokes of fate for ninety-nine years, and recalls to pious beholders the original builder's piety, triumphant at last through the irresistible resurrection of deity.

Resurrection—the recurrence of spring and the renovation of fame—crowns the final movement of this transcendental ballet. The Hideyoshi monument, as

it partly is and wholly shall be, rises tier above tier on heaven-scaling stairs, approached by temples and groves which will one day vie in splendour with the carven gateways, the gigantic cryptomerias of Nikkō. In a joyous finale the dancers pose, wreathed about the central summit of the monument, while cascades of red and green fire play on them from the wings; then, strewing the steps with cherry-blossom and waving provocative clusters in the faces of the spectators as they pass, the double stream of geisha flows back with graceful whirls and eddies between banks of deafening minstrelsy; the curtains rustle down, the fires flicker out; the Miyako-odori is no more.

As I ponder on this fascinating little spectacle, planned by artists and presented by fairies, the memory returns of a ballet, incalculably more magnificent, which the rich municipality of Moscow organised in honour of Nicholas II., Emperor of all the Russias, on the occasion of his coronation. I remember that thousands of roubles were expended; that the decorations and costumes blazed with ostentation; that armies of half-dressed women performed acrobatic feats in searching electric light. If any flowers of imagination had bloomed in the contriver's mind, they had been pitilessly crushed by costumiers, scene-painters, and ballet-masters. The result was a meretricious chaos of meaningless display. Hidden from the eyes of Moscow merchants and revealed to the patient artisans of Kyōto is that spirit of beauty, which, out of cotton and paper and Bengal lights can fashion a poem, so lovely that its simple schemes of form and colour haunt the memory like music, so profound that the deepest instincts of the beholder may be stirred by communion with the faith in which his fathers laboured and died.

It may well have been, however, that the shaven stripling beside me who so kindly unravelled threads of occasional doctrine from the glistening web of Terpsichore was almost alone in his desire to be edified. As he formally took his leave, most of the pittites rushed with laughter up the hill to the Chion-in Temple, before which stands a marvellous and patriarchal cherry-tree. Lamps were hung in its far-reaching boughs, and all night long the light-hearted Kyōto citizens chattered and sang beneath its multitudinous blossom.

The connection between Buddhism and geishadom was recalled to me in a much less poetic setting by a peculiar play, which for seven nights filled the commodious theatre of Tsuruga, a delightful port overlooking the finest harbour on the Sea of Japan. The piece was called "Shimazomasa," and the audience was moved to extraordinary demonstrations of delight by a very long soliloquy delivered for at least ten minutes by a Buddhist priest, who, seated on a mat in the centre of the stage and tapping his knees with a fan, excited my liveliest curiosity as to the purport of his tirade. Could it be a parody on pulpit eloquence? Would these pious townsmen, whose bay was lined with temples, tolerate such mockery of sacred things? The curtain fell and drew up again: the actor was forced to repeat his glib soliloquy. Then, to my extreme bewilderment, the priest was no more seen, and a tortuous but intelligible melodrama ensued, revealing the thefts and treacheries of a geisha, who came in the last act to a miserable end. The next night I returned, and being in time for the first act, which I had missed on the previous occasion, discovered that the plausible preacher was the geisha disguised.

She had escaped from prison, and was recounting to herself the advantages which she expected to reap from the garb of a friar. "Young girls will come to me, craving amulets and charms for their lovers. Thus I shall know the names of honourable young men, who will not be slow to make my acquaintance. And, when we have sipped tea and talked of many pleasant things together, at the right time I shall whisper that it is no priest who is honoured by their august friendship, but Shimazomasa, the geisha. Moreover, I am sure to succeed, for a preacher ought to be a good-looking man. It is then easier for the hearers to keep their eyes fixed on his face; otherwise their eyes wander and they forget to listen." It has been pointed out to me since that passages in this delectable sermon were taken bodily from the "Makura Zoshi" ("Pillow Sketches"), the work of a lady-novelist of the eleventh century. But plagiarism is no sin in the eyes of a Japanese dramatist, and the great merit was to have hit on an original situation. The manager of the theatre was so conscious of this, that, when a second play, entitled "Pistorigoto" ("Robbery under Arms"), failed to draw as well as its predecessor, he boldly transferred the incident without rhyme or reason to the plot, which was neither improved nor worsened by the addition. I was grateful, too, to the author of "Shimazomasa" for a touch of fancy, which redeemed the realism of his sensational story. During a love scene between three suitors and the heroine, who had regained for a time prestige and prosperity, a symbolic geisha, bearing no relation to the personages of the piece, chanted in an upper barred chamber, adjoining the outer wall of the tea-house in which the action was proceeding, snatches of erotic song, praising the joys

of love but foretelling the heavy Nemesis which, sooner or later, overtakes light women. In a play of Æschylus this would have been Erinyes on the Atridean roof, terrible and invisible, presaging doom. But I fear that he who wrote "Shimazomasa" had no deeper design than the interpolation of a taking song, since popular drama is as untroubled as the popular mind by haunting shadows of death and destiny.

# VULGAR SONGS

## VULGAR SONGS

"As for the common people, they have songs of their own, which conform as far as possible to classical models, but are much mixed with colloquialisms, and are accordingly despised by all well-bred persons. The ditties sung by singing-girls to the twanging of the guitar belong to this class."—B. H. CHAMBERLAIN.

POETRY is the most meretricious of arts. Among its adherents are more unconscious snobs than in any of the classes distinguished and damned by Thackeray. This is because extrinsic ornament, the use of words to dazzle or conceal, like jewels or cosmetics, has more effect on most readers than intrinsic beauty, be it depth of feeling or exactitude of thought. Poets are to be excused, and often applauded, for pandering to our eyes and ears instead of ministering to our souls. It is better to admire a mean thought or paltry emotion, draped in exquisite folds of melody and colour, than to deplore a fine theme, marred by vile and clumsy treatment, just as a plain woman, dressed to satisfy the most critical arbiter of elegance, is more pleasing to contemplate than a bank-holiday belle, however comely, in discordant frock and feathers. Now, a beautiful woman beautifully robed is as rare as a poem of which the sense is æsthetically equal to

the form; hence, words being cheaper than ideas and pretty things more plentiful than pretty features, we delight in second-rate women and in second-rate poetry, for want of first-rate, until, the taste being corrupted, we are inclined to endorse Théophile Gautier's canon, *La perfection de la forme c'est la vertu.* The farther we follow this misleading maxim, the farther we leave behind us that most vital poetry, life itself. Often this fact is not perceived, for secondary art has generated secondary emotion: we derive pleasure from allusion rather than illusion, from sleight of wit rather than strength of spirit. Tennyson tells an Arthurian story, or wishes to, and his listeners are so charmed by the irrelevant embroidery of sound and simile that they do not perceive that what they obediently consider a *naïf* barbarian, the hero, is really a Broad Church country-parson in fancy dress. Mr. Swinburne writes an Athenian play, or intends to, and his readers are so ravished by the splendour of intrusive rhetoric that they are in no mood to distinguish between archaic piety and nineteenth-century free-thought. Thus the modern crowns his Muse with paper roses, cleverly manufactured, while the true flower blushes undisturbed or fades in humbler keeping.

Fortunately it happens from time to time that the caprice of fashion lights upon a real rose, which is at once admired not only by the connoisseurs, but by the uncultivated crowd, which has never been taught to appreciate paper roses. Only it is to be observed that the former class retain their reputation by denying the name of rose to the new flower: it is a cowslip, a daisy—nothing more. Having ceased to be meretricious, the kind of verse I mean has ceased to be

poetry, in the opinion of these judges; on the contrary, they insist that, in their eyes, by discarding the frippery of language, which they rate so highly, the author of it is no poet, but a vulgar writer. And so, in the highest sense of the word, he is. He has touched the heart of the vulgar; he has found a common factor, which will "go" successfully "into" any assemblage of figures. Take, for instance, three capital instances of vulgar songs, which, as it seems to me, comply with the conditions demanded of poetry, that it shall communicate at once a vivid picture and a direct emotion. When Mr. Albert Chevalier sings—

"We've been together naow for forty year,
And it don't seem a dy too much;
There ain't a lydy livin' in the land
As I'd swop for my dear old Dutch,"

the pathos of life-long love is conveyed quite as poignantly, if not so verbosely, as by Goethe in "Hermann and Dorothea." It is not literature, but it is poetry. When Mlle. Yvette Guilbert sings—

"J' termine ma lettre en t'embrassant,
Adieu, mon homme,
Quoique tu ne soy pas caressant
J' t'adore comme
J'adorais l' Bon Dieu comm' Papa,
Quand j'étais p'tite,
Et que j'allais communier à
Ste. Marguerite,"

the pathos of recollected innocence in a prostitute of Montmartre is more intense, because less diffusely obtained, than by Victor Hugo in the case of Fantine. The chanson of Aristide Bruant is not literature, but it is poetry. The highest instance of non-literary poetry is afforded by "The Barrack-room Ballads." It

is impossible to deny that the best of them are as vivid and as poignant as any poems ever written. Yet they deliberately distress conventional ears by their substitution of power for beauty as governing principle. But even they retain too much literary skill to illustrate my theory. How surprised were many Londoners when Alphonse Daudet was touched by the rollicking doggerel of "Her golden hair was hanging down her back!" To them there was nothing pathetic in the refrain—

"Oh, Flo! What a change, you know!
When she left the village she was shy;
But alas! and alack! She's come back
With a naughty little twinkle in her eye."

But the distinguished novelist, with his fine sense of the thinly-veiled tragedies of life, was touched. The young gentleman from college, the labourer's daughter; the visit to London, the descent of the girl from stupid simplicity to knowing naughtiness—the whole sordid, pitiable tale lay for him in a badly-written ditty, cynically set to a dancing tune. It takes a foreigner, whose ears have been sealed by fate to the siren-voices of an alien literature, to make such discoveries as this, to discern poetry where literature is woefully wanting. Therefore I am not in the least disconcerted to learn that the Japanese "common people have songs of their own . . . despised by all well-bred persons," but which illustrate for me this familiar phenomenon of non-literary poetry. As a foreigner, I am better fitted to appreciate them. When O Wakachio San sings—

"Andon kakitate
Negao mozoki
Yoso no onna no
Horeru-hazu,"

it may be that she tortures a refined ear by "colloquialisms," but to me her words disclose this graphic thumb-nail sketch of a jealous wife, leaping in one miserable moment from surmise to certainty:

> I, with trimmed lantern,
> Scan thy face, sleeping:
> By a strange woman
> Thou art beloved.

If the singing-girl's vulgar song can stir at times as keen a throb of sympathy as the ditties which celebrate a "coster's courtship" or a gigolette's captivity, yet this effect and colloquial phrasing are the only points of resemblance. The points of difference are so numerous that, before quoting other specimens from a geisha's *répertoire*, something should be said of the characteristics peculiar to this and all Japanese verse.

The most obvious trait of recognised and unrecognised poems is their brevity. The great majority of them consist of three, four, or five lines, in which the number of syllables is either five or seven. Even the so-called Naga-uta (long songs), which enjoyed a short period of popular favour, seldom ran to more than a few dozen lines. Oldest and most classical of metres is the Tanka, a stanza of thirty-one syllables, and a Tanka competition is held every New Year, for which a theme is chosen by the Emperor. In January 1896 thousands of amateur poets composed "Congratulations Compared to a Mountain"; in the following year they sang of "Pine-trees Reflected in Water." The Royal Family itself takes part, and the whole nation thus inaugurates the year with libations of lyrical enthusiasm. Motoöri's famous comparison

of Japanese patriotism to cherry-blossom radiant on the hills at sunrise is a good example of the Tanka:

> "Shikishima no
> Yamato-gokoro wo
> Hito towaba,
> Asahi ni niou
> Yama zakura bana."

This may be rendered—

> Heart of our Island,
> Heart of Yamato,
> If one should ask you
> What it may be;
> Fragrance is wafted
> Through morning sunlight
> Over the mountain,
> Cherry-trees bloom.

But the Hokku or Haikai, which dates from the fifteenth century, imprisons the soul of wit in a cell of even briefer dimensions. It gives the Tanka fourteen syllables start, and covers the course in three strides of five, seven, and five. The pace is so swift that it almost always requires an exegetic field-glass (a microscope and a race of animalcula were perhaps a fitter comparison) to estimate the astonishing triumphs of this wee Pegasus. One of the winners established this remarkable record:

> "Asagao ni
> Tsurube torarete,
> Morai mizu."

The naked eye perceives in this, indistinctly—

> By convolvulus
> Well bucket taken:
> Gift-water.

Mr. B. H. Chamberlain's powerful glasses reveal the merit and the secret of this achievement so clearly that I borrow them for the reader's use. "The poetess Chiyo," it appears, "having gone to her well one morning to draw water, found that some tendrils of convolvulus had twined themselves round the rope. As a poetess and a woman of taste, she could not bring herself to disturb the dainty blossoms. So, leaving her own well to the convolvuli, she went out and begged water of a neighbour." Both Tanka and Haikai may enter for the prizes of polite literature, but the Dodoitsu, being reserved for vulgar songs, is "despised by all well-bred persons." As reasonably might the plebeian "moke" of 'Enery 'Awkins aspire to run at Ascot or Goodwood, as the Dodoitsu be classed with Haikai and Tanka! Culture ignores it; society excludes it from the list of intellectual amusements. Yet its inferiority is sometimes more apparent than real. The metre is a happy medium between the two aristocratic favourites, since it consists of four lines, containing twenty-six syllables in all; three lines of seven syllables are clenched by a finale of five. It very often enshrines a sweet fancy, a delicate image, a chiselled exclamation of grief, or faith, or roguery. The nearest analogue to all three would be the epigram, were it not that the Oriental poet frequently aims at nothing more than a pictorial flash; a landscape seen by lightning, a life divined by instinct; a momentary miniature, not a condensed conclusion. I can think of but one English poem which partially follows the same method, Robert Browning's "Apparitions":

"Such a starved bank of moss
Till, that May-morn,

Blue ran the flash across:
Violets were born!

"World—how it walled about
Life with disgrace
Till God's own smile came out:
That was thy face!"

Yet, bright and clean-cut though it be, this gem is clouded by metaphors which would puzzle the Japanese intellect. It would fail to grasp the meaning of "a starved bank"; it would miss the identity of "God's smile" with a human face. Personification and metaphor lie outside its limits: even the simile is rare. In the forty or fifty Dodoitsu which I have collected and translated no simile is employed, unless both branches are plainly indicated. They abound in fancy; they lack imagination. They derive their very force from this limpet-like allegiance to fact, their suggestiveness from the assurance that the quick-witted but unimaginative reader will associate one fact with others of the same order and not be misled by the vagaries of Western vision. To the Western mind, on the other hand, this association, wanting in his experience, will sometimes need explanation; at other times the meaning is crystal-clear. There are shades of significance, touches of tenderness, which escape translation because dependent on grammatical peculiarities which no European tongues possess. The personal pronoun, generally unexpressed, by its absence generalises and so humanises the passion of a lover's cry; a reticence is gained which accords well with the shrinking delicacy of a sensitive heart. When expressed, the word for "I" will connote submission, the word for "thou" lordship or lovership, by a double sense, impossible to convey. Thus, the very structure of Japanese verse,

even in the case of vulgar songs, forbids that literary luxuriance which makes modern English poetry "meretricious" because tricked out with superfluous gewgaws. You cannot daub such a tiny profile with Tennysonian enamel or Swinburnian rouge. On the other hand, it were absurd to pretend that the Tanka, much less the Dodoitsu, is often of superlative value. For one which embeds in amber a scene or sentiment of exceptional worth, a thousand will deserve as much immortality as an ingenious riddle or far-fetched pun. Yet, it being conceded that their literary pretensions amount to nil, a foreign student will find in the hundreds of Dodoitsu, published anonymously in paper-covered volumes, which cost about three farthings, an inexhaustible fund of plebeian sentimentality and humour.

Apology should perhaps be offered for the very imperfect mould in which I have attempted to recast the Dodoitsu. If the reader will repeat to himself, dwelling equally on each syllable, the following poem, he will remark three things: first, the absence of rhyme; secondly, the liquid lapse of melodious words; thirdly, the sudden jerk with which it terminates:

"Nushi to neru toki
Makura ga iranu
Tagaï-chigaï no
O te makura."

I have adopted a metre which avoids rhyme and ends abruptly, but runs more swiftly than the original. I have prefixed a title. Thus the preceding poem becomes—

PILLOW SONG.

Sleeping beside thee,
No need of pillow;
Thine arm and mine arm,
Pillows are they.

This being alternative to the method sometimes adopted of literal unrhythmical translation, I hope occasional licence will be condoned. This is what I might have written:

Lord-and-master (or Thee)-with-sleep-when,
Pillow-indeed-no-go-;
Mutual-different-of
Honourable-Arm-Pillow.

To be quite literal is to be crudely unintelligible; the absence of all gender, number, and person makes certain interpolations inevitable. At the same time, the translator must take for his unvarying motto *Sancta simplicitas*.

Love, of course, inspires innumerable quatrains, which fly from mouth to mouth, from geisha to gejo, like butterflies from one blossom to another. Sometimes it is the man who speaks, as in the following:

SNOW SONG.

Careless of snow-drifts,
Nightly I seek thee;
Deeper the love lies,
Heaped in my heart.

More often the woman, who does not allow her sense of humour to be atrophied by passion. But perhaps the humour is quite unconscious in this description of

LOVERS MEETING.

So much to talk of!
Yet for joy weeping,
Words, when we meet, fall
Head over heels.

Bodily beauty is, of course, particularly fascinating to a race which cannot be pronounced less susceptible to

its charm than those European peoples—Greek, Italian, French—whose feeling for line and colour is reckoned a superiority in them to their Northern neighbours. Yet the panegyric of his mistress's hair or eyes or bosom is entirely banished from even vulgar songs. Innate refinement rather than cold indifference is probably the cause. The tree of the spirit is preferred to the fruit and flowerage of the flesh. Yet one seems to detect a flavour of apology in this:

CONFESSION.

Stylish appearance
Does not bewitch me;
Fruits pass, and flowers:
I love the tree.

The Japanese word *ki* signifies both "tree" and "spirit." Quite commonplace, I own, is the consolation afforded by some lines engraven on a toothpick, but how many almond-eyed maidens visiting the tea-house which thus combined mental with carnal refreshment have tittered to read them!

CONSOLATION.

In mine ears linger
Words said at parting;
Sleeping alone, I
Hope for a dream.

Rather quaint is the following lament over conjugal incompatibility. But the wife knows that she must submit, on pain of divorce; and the word *kigane*, which I have rendered "trouble," is used of little inevitable domestic worries. The terms "fire-nature" and "water-nature" are taken from Chinese philosophy.

INCOMPATIBILITY.

Thou, cold as water,
I, hot as fire;
Till we to earth turn,
Trouble is mine.

Mathematicians who revel in romance of the fourth dimension will note with pleasure this little sum in amorous arithmetic:

ADDITION.

Longing to meet thee,
Longing to see thee,
Six and four inches,
Passion's a-foot!

The exact translation being—

Longing to meet, six inches,
Longing to see, four inches,
These, indeed, being added together,
Make a *shaku*.

The word *shaku* has two meanings: (1) a linear foot; (2) a woman's hysterical desire. Ten inches go to a Japanese foot.

The separation of lovers is a fruitful topic. I select three poems which treat of it in divergent but equally piquant manners. The first might be called—

AMANTIUM IRÆ.

Would that my heart were
Cut out and shown thee!
Quarrelling leaves me
Deeper in love.

The second contains a hint of that fondness for trees and flowers which permeates all classes:

AMONG THE PINES.

If, from thee sundered,
I roam the pine-wood,
Can it be dew falls?
Can it be tears?

The third frames a pretty fancy:

REFLECTION.

Far from each other,
Yearning for union;
Good, were our faces
Glassed in the moon!

Then it should be remarked that the wife figures as frequently as the sweetheart in this lyrical woodland, vocal with twittering sentiment. The European has been so long accustomed to regard romance as the province of young men and maidens, led through three volumes or five acts to the altar, that married life is either prosaic or only to be made interesting by a breach of the Seventh Commandment. More than ever does he presume that this convention must apply to domestic life in the East, for he has always been informed that there a girl must stifle the instincts of her heart and pass submissively from her father's to her mother-in-law's yoke. As the French saw puts it, *Fille on nous supprime, femme on nous opprime.* But this reasoning fails to take into account two modifying considerations. Custom is so tempered by practice that an affectionate parent (his name is legion) would not risk his daughter's happiness by marrying her to an odious or notoriously evil person. Japanolaters will assert that no Japanese person can be odious unless corrupted by Western influence. But this is nonsense. What most makes for happy marriages is the strong

sense of duty and the loving disposition of a Japanese girl. Neither husband nor wife regards the sexual instinct, however veiled, as the corner-stone of partnership for life. Obedience to parental wisdom is the first stage, mutual politeness the second, devotion to children, begotten or adopted, the third. From these unselfish elements a high average of felicity is attained, possibly even higher than elsewhere. However that may be, the wife's fidelity, jealousy, affection recur as motives of popular poesy. That essentially feminine quality which every bachelor has observed in some otherwise perfect wife "wedded to a churl," and of which I can find no better definition than the following verse affords, would seem common to both hemispheres:

RAISON DE FEMME.

Dearer than kindness
Of those I love not
Is thine unkindness,
Loved one, to me.

This degrading and doglike devotion explains the joy in service which robs it of all sting. Take this revolting picture, which I christen

CONTENTED.

Gladly on love's road
Pulling the rickshaw,
Undrawn, I draw it
On to the end.

The husband (selfish brute!) is of course seated in the rickshaw, and it is worth notice that "love's road" is the first metaphor we have encountered. Against the jealous wife, bending, lantern in hand, over her

faithless lord, may be set this quiet tribute of grateful security:

MY HUSBAND.

Thou art as yonder
Delicate hill-pine,
Through years a thousand
Ever the same.

It would not occur to a Tōkyō editor to invite his readers in the silly season to answer the question, "Have women a sense of humour?" But, if it did, such quatrains as follow might convince him that they have:

WARNING.

I am my master's
Single-flowered cherry;
Folk seeking blossom
Bend no boughs here.

WAITING.

All night I waited,
Yet my lord came not;
None but the moon came
Under my net.

The *kaya* (mosquito-net) is not a mere curtain, but a green gauze room within a room, suspended from the corners of the ceiling.

Humour has indeed discharged thousands of these pretty pellets, which lend themselves admirably to satire, drollery, and play on words. Yet these are precisely the most difficult to render. A jest, of which the point depends on punning ambiguity, should never cross the frontier. When a foreigner has been made to see the quaint conjunction of incongruous ideas, he will yet miss the surprise attending identity

of sound, which strikes with comic duplicity a native ear. Moreover, the Japanese looks for verbal legerdemain in his most serious literature with an appreciation that seems puerile to us, who relegate puns and riddles to half-educated minds. There is an equally large field of fun which can only be indicated, since British prudery plants it round with fig-trees. The Japanese, like the French, see no harm in tipping Apollo's arrows with malicious mirth to assail humanity in the arms of Venus, where it cuts a vulnerable and often ridiculous figure. The Anglo-Saxon professes to exclude comedy from the bedroom. He gains in dignity; he loses in gaiety. If this same comedy, banished to the smoking-room, descend to too gross levels, he has only to cross the Channel and will find at the Palais Royal or elsewhere such traps for laughter as Shakespeare and Aristophanes did not disdain to set. He supposes that the interests of morality require many drags on the wheels of humour. He is generally sincere: the restraint is not imposed by "hypocrisy," as foreigners believe and assert. But neither is the opposite assumption justified, that races which permit themselves more joyous licence are less virtuous than our own. On the contrary, they find in laughter a safety-valve sanctioned by custom. And it seems to me that Madame and Okamisan, who are free to giggle behind their fans at audacious pleasantry, are placed by destiny in a more fortunate attitude than the British matron, who is reduced to indignation or discomfort. Critics of Japanese poems, novels, and plays usually dismiss this element of mirth with the adjective "pornographic," but the epithet (if it presuppose an ignobly prostituted pen) entirely misses the mark. The passages so labelled do not allure readers with

the promise of forbidden fruit: they merely denote a wider range of innoxious merriment, indulged in by a nation whose sense of humour is as yet unfettered by our local and artificial sense of propriety. The *naïveté* of such songs is proved by the fact that they hardly ever sound a cynical note. The tone of the only one which I shall quote is exceptional:

LOTHARIO.

Steered with deft rudder,
Fooled with soft speeches,
To my verandah
I hale her up.

But this song may have the opposite meaning of a woman alluring a man with soft speeches. As there are no pronouns and no genders in the vernacular, the sense is entirely ambiguous, and the Japanese whom I have consulted do not agree. So I append the original:

"Shita go kaji toru
Ano kuchiguruma
Noshite nikai
Hiki-ageru."

A fragrant anthology might be compiled of Dodoitsu written in praise of flowers. There is certainly no other country where flowers are so universally loved. The humblest cottager will place in the *tokonoma* (an alcove with slightly raised daïs) of his living room an iris, a spray of plum-blossom, or a liliputian tree. The noble will devote years of patient cultivation to the production of a chrysanthemum more variegated in colour and shape than those of his neighbour. Wistaria, lotus, convolvulus, and azalea vie with the cherry-blossom in attracting sightseers, who come in

crowds to feast their eyes on garden or pond. The arts of flower-arrangement and landscape-gardening may be looked upon as branches of science and philosophy; at least, they command as much veneration. Inevitably, then, is the minstrel's lyre enwreathed with innumerable garlands. Yet, possibly because of the "pathetic fallacy," which so constantly pervades similar parterres of English poesy that its absence makes the Japanese flower-plot seem scentless, the fancies which find expression in this class of subject appear particularly trivial. Sometimes a personal preference is stated, as in

WHITE PEONY.

Full of set flowers,
Full is my chamber;
Thou art most stately,
White peony.

Sometimes the cut blossom is commiserated, as in

ADRIFT.

Ah! how my petals
Float in the flower-vase;
Helpless and rootless;
Sad is my lot.

Sometimes the operation of a natural law, to which plants as well as other forms of life are subject, points a moral:

DEATH, THE LEVELLER.

Peonies, roses,
Faded, are equal;
Only while life blooms
Differ the flowers.

But human egoism, which only sees in nature a back-

ground to its own existence, has not stained with drops of romantic blood these pale flowerets. No Japanese poet would conceive such a stanza as that in "Maud"—

"There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate;
The larkspur listens 'I hear,' 'I hear';
And the lily whispers, 'I wait.'"

He knows that the Great Mother has other cares more absorbing than the love-sick suspense of a whining suitor, that the myriad marriages of bird and beast and blossom are perhaps as much or as little to her as the predilections of Maud. He would enjoy Professor Huxley's rap at the singers who "mistake their sensual caterwauling for the music of the spheres," and his pedestrian fancy would shudder at the unchartered imagination of Tennyson.

Buddhist doctrines have so profoundly influenced thought and feeling, that thousands of little songs rise daily like prayers of intercession or gratitude to the Lord Buddha. But these would demand a volume of explanation, which I am not competent to write. I select one playful and one serious poem, having reference to religious ideas. The first might be called

EXTRAVAGANCE.

Joy drew the rickshaw,
Heaven takes vengeance,
Empty the larder,
Rickshaw of fire.

This may be expanded into: "We drove about in a rickshaw, enjoying ourselves; we spent all our money; we are punished by Heaven, for we suffer remorse, like the sinners, who are pulled in fiery rickshaws by

avenging devils in hell." Such engaging pictures of a future state are often exhibited at temple *fêtes*, and serve to stimulate liberality on the part of worshippers. Quite philosophic is the pessimism of

Occasion.

For the moon, cloud-wrack;
For the flower, tempest;
For the truth, *this* world;
Wanting the hour.

I translate *ukiyo* by "*this* world": the more scrupulous dictionary renders it by "this fleeting or miserable world, so full of vicissitudes and unsettled." For the "vale of tears" is not a Christian concept only: Mrs. Gummidge was also a Buddhist without knowing it. It is curious that this theological term, with its disparaging connotation, was affixed to the modern popular school of painters, among whom Hokusai is the best known, because they descended from lofty, conventional subjects to the life of workaday folk. The central thought of the poem, however, narrowed to a romantic application, recalls a line by Browning:

"Never the time and place, and the loved one altogether."

Writers of Dodoitsu have this advantage over versifiers who employ more classical metres, that they are not forced by convention to repeat stereotyped fancies, but are at liberty to invent new ones. The balloon, the camera, the locomotive, may take the place of dragon, stork, and phœnix. This pouring of foreign wine into native bottles produces a quaint blend. A girl thus reproaches her lover with

INCONSTANCY.

My heart to body
Fuel to engine;
Thy heart an air-ship
Loose in the sky.

Here the similes are plain and forcible. The next poem is less lucid:

DESPAIR.

Borne in no road-car,
Endless the railway,
How shall poor I reach
Station at last?

Literally: "Riding in no vehicle (which is used for a short journey), the train whithersoever going (for an indefinite distance), By doing what shall this body of mine, Terminus?" That is: My love is not a short-lived fancy, but a lifelong passion, until I reach the terminus of death. Graceful, indeed, but scarcely gracious is a lady's reply to an admirer who had sent her his photograph:

THE HIGHER PHOTOGRAPHY.

Only your likeness!
Faithful? I know not.
Could I but take one,
Too, of your heart!

The double meaning of a "faithful" likeness and a "faithful" lover can, for once, be preserved in English. A pun on the word *tokeru*, which means "to melt" and "to be undone," is allied with a dainty antithesis in

DISSOLUTION.

White snow of Fuji
Loosened at sunrise;
Maiden's *shimada*
Loosened for sleep.

The *shimada* is perhaps the most elaborate, and certainly the most elegant, way of dressing the hair. It is generally adopted by geisha and young married women, dividing favour with the *chōchō* or butterfly coiffure. Respect for age is counselled in a rather pathetic protest by an old woman, who recalls her faded beauty in a conventional image. Nightingales and plum-trees are always associated in Japanese minds.

ONCE.

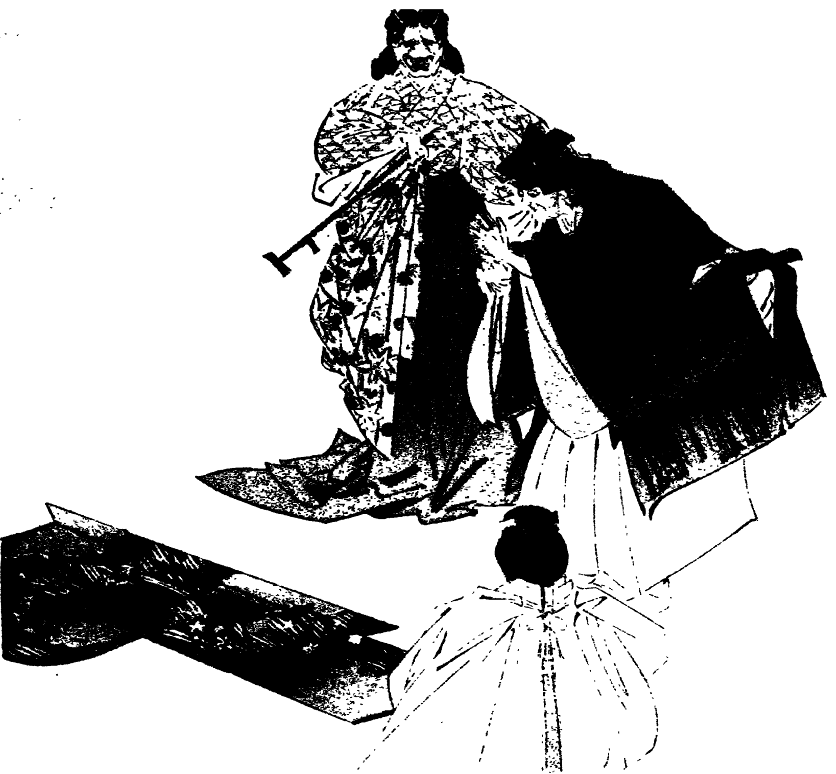
Mock not the puckered
Bloom of a dried plum;
Once on its fresh spray
Nightingales wept.

The *umeboshi*, a plum pickled in salt and *shiso* and afterwards dried, is as happily descriptive of the wizened monkey face of a Japanese crone as the peach of an Anglo-Saxon lassie's complexion. It will be seen that serio-comic touches of self-depreciation, like the old lady's frank comparison of faded bloom to dried fruit, do not jar on the Japanese. Sincerity—genuine feeling and just appreciation—is at the root of their poetic impulse. Why should a disappointed girl shrink from whispering her secret to the reeds of anonymous minstrelsy?

REJECTION.

As vine weds ivy,
So would I clasp him;
If the man will not,
What can be done?

From the foregoing thirty Dodoitsu the reader can form a not inadequate opinion of "ditties sung by singing-girls to the twanging of the guitar." That



Jealousy exorcised from Aoi-no-Uye. (Nō)

accidental glamour, which constitutes style and makes of one word a queen, of another a beggar-maid, through vicissitudes of usage, does not emanate from one of them. They are marred for a native ear by domestic and colloquial idiom, "soiled by all ignoble use"; they treat too often of sexual sentiment, which our literary verse parades to satiety, and which theirs rather shrouds in dignified silence. No doubt you will find among Tanka and Haikai more ingenuity of thought, more dexterity of pen. But, putting that aside, the Dodoitsu has more interest for a humanist, since its range of feeling is wider. Just as the street-scenes of Hokusai and the love-scenes of Utamaro afford more humane pleasure than the purely artistic studies of their academic precursors, so we are less allured by "A Fan in my Lady's Chamber," by "A Distant View of a Fishing Boat," by "Hoar-frost on the Bamboos," than by the artless outcries of else inarticulate nature. The blue-stocking at court, who finds it so easy to turn a polished compliment, is more remote from our hearts than her humble sister, doing rough work in the rice-field. The sorrows of wife and maid, the joy of flowers and laughter—these inspire in us deeper sympathy than the experimental literature of dilettante dames. There is often a crude spontaneity in the non-literary poem which is more pleasing than a recondite conceit. But, however crude the expression may be, it yet owes something to form. The poet is obliged to satisfy the easy metrical conditions which regulate the structure of a Dodoitsu, thus ensuring a neat circlet for a single gem, whether it be paste or diamond. How clumsy a Japanese song can become, when the Muse has forgotten her corset, may be seen by the following effusion:

"Mukōjima,
Cherry-blossom,
Sliced dumpling,
Boiled eggs,
Girl, come here!
Drinking, sleeping,
Heigh-ho! Tra-la-la!"

This is neither poetry nor literature. It reminds one of the primitive war-song, which Mr. Aston quotes in his "History of Japanese Literature" as being sung by the Imperial Guards:

"Ho! now is the time;
Ho! now is the time;
Ha! Ha! Psha!
Even now
My boys!
Even now
My boys!"

In conclusion, let me say that an exhaustive study of Dodoitsu would assuredly yield richer results than the writer has been able to obtain by the casual gleaning of such songs as fell in his way from the lips of geisha or student.

# TAKING THE WATERS

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## I

In a large enclosure behind one of the smaller Shiba temples on a burning 1st of July sat a perspiring crowd of men and boys, whose attitude of joyful and critical attention strangely revived memories of a great match at Lord's or the Oval. Yet the trial of strength which was provoking similar enthusiasm presented a very different spectacle. Instead of the green pitch, a sanded ring formed the arena; instead of twenty-two lithe cricketers, clad in white flannels and protected by glove and pad from dangerous balls, a band of twenty-two wrestlers, enormous and bloated, with no clothing but a garish loin-cloth and no protection but their own skill, awaited the umpire's word to begin. He, too, bore little likeness to the straw-hatted oracle in a milkman's coat, whose vigilant silence is unbroken but for occasional appeals from bowler or batsman. His *kimono* was of grey silk, his sash embroidered with gold, his short cape of black silk with brightly coloured clasp; and, as he gave the signal with his fan, or directed the combatants with excited insistence, hopping and crying on the flanks of the panting giants, he resembled some gorgeous gadfly goading two buffaloes

to the fray. Nothing could be less Japanese than the build and bulk of the wrestlers. They seemed men of another race, Maoris or Patagonians, with their huge naked limbs and long hair, drawn forward in a queue to the middle of the head or falling loose on the shoulders. Before entering the ring each would carefully adjust his apron and bind his hair as coquettishly as possible, for, hideous though they appear to us, these monsters of fat and muscle are the darlings of every schoolboy, enjoying a popularity as fervent as that of "W. G." or Prince "Ranji." Their names, their records, their chances of success are on every tongue.

The bouts are more interesting to watch than any I had seen elsewhere, for attack and defence were more various. The conqueror might win by other methods than by bringing his opponent to the ground: if he could hurl or hustle him outside the ring, victory was his. The rules are said to authorise forty-eight falls—twelve throws, twelve lifts, twelve twists, and twelve throws over the back. To avoid being pinned down or pitched out, the smaller men must exercise extraordinary agility, and loud was the shouting when Goliath fell victim to a scientific ruse. It happened sometimes that the men lost their tempers; spitting, slapping, taunting would precede more legitimate sport: then indeed it was good to hear the bystanders' Homeric laughter, which soon recalled the heroes to their higher selves. I will confess that these indecorous interludes were partly due to a mischievous American, who primed his favourites with praise and whisky. As the afternoon wore on, the heat became intolerable, but, fired with professional ambition, Dares succeeded Entellus, while cheap coloured portraits of the competitors found ready sale and the overcrowded enclosure

reeked of sweat and sand. At length the final bout was announced. Each side chose a champion, whose laurels were difficult to gain, for three rivals must be worsted in continuous struggle by the prize-winner. Before the end was reached my patience had been exhausted. On a degenerate descendant of the fighting Anglo-Saxon breed this barbarous exhibition of brute locked with brute began to pall. Besides, the tropical atmosphere, which from that day forward made dress a weariness and sleep impossible, pleaded more eloquently than any argument how wise it were to seek less fiery pleasures. I resolved to leave Tōkyō the following day and take the waters of some mountain-spa, remote from wrestlers and mosquitoes.

At an altitude of nearly three thousand feet on the north-eastern slope of Mount Haruna, an extinct volcano, stands the picturesque village of Ikao. Half the houses are hotels and most have balconies, which command a view of the Tonegawa Valley and sublime Akagi San. The main street climbs from terrace to terrace, a natural staircase, between châlets equipped with bamboo pipes, through which the hot yellow water pours incessantly. Proximity to the capital makes this health resort very popular, yet access is not altogether easy. After five hours' train to Mayebashi, another five hours are required of rather rough rickshaw travelling : at one point the Tonegawa must be crossed by means of a rope ferry ; at others the traveller must dismount, so steep is the road. Yet he will be well rewarded at his journey's end by a panorama of rare extent and beauty. Behind him, and eighteen hundred feet above, soars Soma-yama, from which the summit of Fuji is just visible ; opposite stretch the Mikuni and Nikko ranges ; at his feet are wooded valleys and

foaming torrents. The Kindayu Hotel, under most courteous and capable management, combines two great advantages. It supplies the foreigner with such food and general comfort as his habits generally render indispensable; at the same time, it accommodates so many Japanese of all classes, that exceptional opportunities are afforded of becoming more intimately acquainted with the latter than would be possible in their own homes, where various duties and claims absorb their time. Here they seek only health and pleasure: no obstacle but the easily surmounted barrier of language hinders mutually delightful intercourse. At least, the writer formed more friendships and obtained more glimpses of native life during a month at Ikao than at any other period of his stay in the country.

Bathing is, of course, the centre round which existence revolves. Half-a-dozen small baths, fitted with hot and cold water, that the temperature may be modified to suit each bather, enable the stranger to bathe in the solitude he prefers. But more than two dozen others, in which from three to thirteen people can bathe together, are more characteristic of the place. The largest has a hot douche, and the temperature is often as high as 115° Fahrenheit. Here the native guests return two or three times a day to soak and to gossip. In this *al fresco* salon laughter reigns and conversation flows as freely as the water. Surprised indeed would the bathers be to learn that a costume is deemed essential by more prurient races, whose artificial manners divorce simplicity from decency. Yet Western prudery is beginning to corrupt the upper classes, who tend to convert these social gatherings into family parties, without going so

far as to adopt a bathing-dress. The water is rather turbid and yellow. It contains iron and sulphate of soda. Most of the patients suffer from rheumatism or barrenness, and look on a course of treatment as a sovereign remedy. Some also drink of the mineral spring which lies at the end of the Yusawa ravine, where seats and swings line a well-shaded avenue. Probably they derive more benefit from the pleasant promenade than the unpleasant beverage.

The first friend I made was a silk merchant and a poet. I shall call him Yamada San. I had gone one day a few hundred yards down the precipitous path leading to Shibukawa, when my attention was arrested by a very pretty tableau. To the left of the road lay a lute-shaped pond, traversed by little bridges and dotted with islands on which stone lanterns and wooden shrines proclaimed the owner's piety. The deeper end of the lakelet was overshadowed by a balcony, on which sat two serious young men with rod and line, while a daintily-dressed girl reclining beside them was preparing bait—that is, crumbling a soft bread-cake with delicate fingers. The fish seemed wary, and I remarked one astute leviathan among gold-fish that succeeded in snatching the bait and swimming away with an impudent cock of the tail that would have exasperated a less patient angler. Remarking my interest, the fishermen politely invited me to join them; and then I discovered two curious features of this gentle angling—its cheapness and its humanity. The proprietor was willing to provide all accessories and implements for three-farthings, on one condition: any fish which had the imprudence to be hooked must be tenderly replaced in the water. Thus he reconciled Buddhistic kindness to animals with

encouragement of sport, and the fish obtained a maximum of food with a minimum of risk. It seemed that Yamada San was also staying at Kindayu's. We therefore returned together, while O Mitsu, his charming child-wife, walked submissively behind. Woven silk filled his business hours, but woven sentiments his leisure. Before the hotel was reached he confided to me the poem which had just germinated in his mind that afternoon. He had really been fishing for fancies.

"Yioyeyama
Kasanaru kumono
Ōkunaron
Honokani moreru
Saoshika no koye."

Range above range, piled up to the clouds, what numberless mountains!
Faintly between escapes from afar the voice of the roebuck.

As he understood a little English, I conferred on him this brace of hexameters. He was naturally astonished by such long lines, but, as his Tānka contained thirty-one syllables and my translation only thirty, we had both expressed the same ideas in about the same space. Exchange of verses was followed by exchange of presents. In the evening I received a large cake with Yamada San's compliments. Then came my first unconscious lapse from etiquette. In the hope of pleasing both husband and wife, I presented O Mitsu with a quaintly carven *kanzashi*, an ornamental hair-pin; but, though she did not seem displeased, the poet thanked me with a cold, disapproving air. At a later stage he explained how improper it was considered to pay the least attention to a married woman. I apologised, and he went on to explain that

love-marriages were becoming the rule and not the exception, and that among his friends few matches were now arranged without consulting the wishes of the two most concerned. However, O Mitsu was permitted to play to me on her *koto*, and to condone my indiscretion with the parting gift of a much-cherished fan, on which was inscribed a famous poem by Tsuma to the following effect:

Though I may sing of the beautiful garments of beautiful women,
Dearer to me are the pines of Japan and the cherries in blossom.

By this engaging couple I was initiated into a novel game, played with flower cards, *Hana-Karuta*. The pack consists of forty-eight pieces, each three inches by two, and of twelve suits, Moon, Rain, Iris, Clover, Cherry-blossom, Maple-leaf, Wistaria, Chrysanthemum, Pine, Peony, Plum, and *Paulownia Imperialis*. The four cards of each suit are worth 1, 5, 10, and 20 points respectively. The player may only draw a card from the pool if he have one of the same suit in his hand. Failing this, he must enrich the pool by one of his cards when his turn comes to draw. Each pair, when made, is laid on the table, and when the pack is exhausted the player who has scored most points is declared winner. This very simple game had much vogue in Ikao, but when the party included no ladies the more difficult *Go-Ban* was more popular. Like all his countrymen, Yamada San was a rapid draughtsman, and would often, when appealed to for information on historical or religious matters, illustrate his meaning by clever sketches. Of these I retain two excellent specimens: a drawing of Yoshit-

sune in elaborate armour and a long-nosed *tengu*, or mountain-goblin, which has many characteristics in common with the Scandinavian *trold*. Unfortunately, our acquaintance was limited to three days, for at the end of that time business recalled the poet to Ashikaga, but he exacted a promise that I would pay a visit to that interesting town, given up to cotton and Confucius.

As if to console me on the evening of this departure, the kindly Kindayu family invited all their guests to a performance given by three local geisha in the principal room of the hotel. The chief musician was a masculine-looking woman of fifty, who thrummed a *kokyu*, or three-stringed fiddle, and broke in on the recitative of her young companions at unexpected moments with peculiar growls and sharp cries as of an animal in agony. When the narrative of the soloist took a tragic turn, these inhuman noises were so distressing that, without following the story, I experienced acute pain, while my neighbours of the more sympathetic sex were actually in tears. Had my musical education been more advanced, I should have realised that these were no singers of light Dodoitsu, but exponents of a far loftier type of entertainment, the *Gedayu* or musical drama. It originated in the middle of the seventeenth century, and is sometimes called *Jōruri* after a heroine of that name, whose tragic love for Yoshitsune is a favourite theme of composers. In fact, the geisha on this occasion were usurping the *rôle* of *Jōruri-katari* or dramatic reciters, whose chanted recitative formed the nucleus, first, of the marionette theatre, and, later, of the popular theatre, when dialogue and scenic art were superadded. In the absence of either human or

wooden dolls, a most lugubrious effect was produced. At last, to my relief, a male performer, a *pince-sans-rire*, whose dry humour and staccato diction stamped him of the tribe of Grossmith, transformed the audience from weeping Niobes to effigies of mirth. In vain the polite little ladies tried to smother their smiles behind their raised *kimono* sleeves: as the song proceeded they were vanquished by fits of laughter, and shook helplessly on their cushions. I possessed but one cue to this infectious merriment in the constantly recurring word *emma*, which on the lips of Mr. Dan Leno would have assuredly referred to his wife or his mother-in-law, those patient butts of music-hall humour, but which would only mean for Japanese ears the Buddhist Rhadamanthus, who pronounces sentence on all who enter hell. Considerably mystified, I turned to Tanaka Okusama, another visitor from Ashikaga, and inquired if "the honourable singer were really singing about hell-things." He was. The song was an amusing but irreverent pastiche of social satire. It described the arrival in Hades of the bad judge, the cheating merchant, the false singing-girl; their confession and appropriate punishment. Again I missed the marionettes, for their presence would have recalled an exactly similar treatment of the same theme in a Montmartre puppet-show. And I remembered how the Parisian populace joined delightedly in the cry of "A la chaudière!" as the mimic devil chased lawyer and cocotte into a Punch-and-Judy Inferno. It was the mystery play of the Middle Ages, surviving as a crude comedy for the ignorant poor—a rough travesty of the theology in which their more instructed superiors still affect to believe.

In the course of the next fortnight I became well acquainted with Tanaka Okusama, and through her with many others. She was a most intelligent, capable woman, who conducted one business while her husband had charge of another, grain and rice being the commodities in which they dealt. She considered herself middle-aged at the age of thirty-two, wore therefore most sombre colours, and was the mother of six boys, two of whom joined her at Ikao. Her explanation of the *emma* song was followed by an avowal of religious disbelief. She was neither a Buddhist nor a Shintoist, but believed that the priests taught old wives' fables, and for her own part concentrated her mind on her business and her family. A free-thinking Japanese woman was a novel phenomenon to me then, though I have since met several. The fragments of Western history which she had acquired were also interesting items in her conversation. Plied with questions about English sights and customs, I was also asked to give an opinion on Cæsar, Napoleon, and Epaminondas. What I recalled of the last hero was so shadowy that I felt inclined to parody the Oxford undergraduate's evasive reply: "About Epaminondas little is known, but it may safely be assumed that, as he lived, so he died." However, Tanaka Okusama knew more than that about him, for she had just been reading "Keikoku Bidan," a popular novel by Yano Fumiō, who is supposed to have selected Theban politics for his subject, that he might administer useful lessons to his compatriots. I suspected that novel-reading was the source of most of the lady's knowledge. Indeed, she disclaimed all pretension to the title of blue-stocking.

Continual tea-parties in my room or hers, though very educational, were marred for one of us by two circumstances—the familiarity of servants and the uncertainty of time. Democratic in sympathy, preferring the expansiveness of the simple to the discreet inanity of the genteel, I was yet a little surprised to remark the ultra-friendly relations between servant and guest. A "boy" would enter with profound obeisance, deliver a message or an article demanded, and, being invited to join the party, would play cards, ask and be asked very personal questions, make himself thoroughly at home, and depart when duty called, bowing low. At first it is difficult not to associate these prostrations with subservience, but they really imply nothing but good manners. When the guest left the hotel, he would hand the "boy" a tip, wrapped in paper, as etiquette requires, for that delicacy which impels us to concede intimacy and refuse money, or to refuse intimacy and concede money to social inferiors, because the conjunction of the two offends our sense of the deference due to class-distinctions, would appear strange to the far more rigidly classified Japanese. In fact, more real democracy—if by that be meant frank and unembarrassed intercourse between high and low—is possible under a caste system than any other. Every one "knows his place," and has no inducement to affect a higher rank than he really possesses by an assumption of haughty manners. The innate courtesy of most Japanese servants renders friendship with them more delightful than might be supposed, but occasionally one comes across a conceited, half-educated fellow in European dress, who passes from familiarity to impertinence. However, I was soon taught a more difficult lesson than that of

forgetting class prejudice. Perhaps the hardest of all truths engrained in Oriental theory and conduct is the unimportance of time. We, who live by machinery which measures for most men the hours of work, the hours of play, until life becomes a time-table and the heart a chronometer, are absolutely incapable of indifference to Time's tyranny. When I proffered or accepted an invitation, nothing amused these hospitable lotus-eaters so much as my natural bias towards punctuality. What did it matter? The morning, if I liked, or the afternoon, or the evening: time was made for man, not man for time. Accordingly, if I paid a promised call and became the involuntary witness of a toilette, a meal, or a siesta, I had merely to withdraw and call again. If my guests did not arrive at the prescribed hour, they would come some hours later, or even sooner, or not at all. At first I was so put out by these vagaries and so fearful of intruding, that it took message after message to draw me from my own society or that of a book. But gradually I realised that in this happy country offence was not readily given or taken; that time was a negligible convention; that to follow the impulse of the moment was wiser than to ape the precision of a clock. I have heard the British trader exclaim in Japan, "They can never become a great nation; they are so unbusiness-like!" and I sympathised with his horror of Eastern nonchalance, but I doubt his conclusion. Merchants in Russia are just as dilatory. Yet either country can count on promptitude in military or political exigency. What commerce loses in time it gains to some extent through restrictions imposed on foreign rivalry. In any case, as they emerge from feudal to industrial conditions those indolent races will be forced by the law

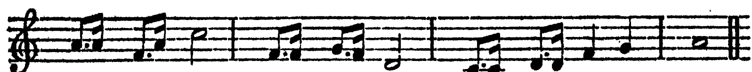
of self-defence to quicken the pace. As for me, I resolved to ignore my watch and rely on Zaburo Tanaka.

Zaburo was a bright-eyed schoolboy of ten. Close-shaven and bare-footed, he raced from wing to wing of the hotel in a single cotton garment with cheerful impetuosity. At breakfast I would hear him on a balcony fifty yards away reading aloud in that monotonous sing-song which his countrymen adopt, even in trains, without evoking a protest from fellow-travellers. At first I imagined him to be reciting prayers, but this supposition was erroneous. Two or three times a day his knock would rattle on my sliding-door and a loud summons would entreat Edoardo San to keep him company. When his mother was occupied with private cares, he would obtain leave to visit with me the Benten-daki, and as we watched the tumbling terror of that lovely waterfall, sparkling against green boughs, I was the recipient of many schoolboy confidences. His great ambition was to fight for the Mikado; his accounts of school life were tinged with military ardour. The elder boys had guns and knapsacks of fur; in the summer boys and masters camped out together; his intimate friend, Rokutaro, had lost an elder brother in the war with China, and the others were quite envious of that funereal privilege. He remembered one verse of a song which his schoolfellows were fond of singing, as they marched to the drill-ground. The air was spirited, but the words were more *naïf* than ingenious, if the following stanza be typical of the rest:

## JAPANESE WAR-SONG



*Ana u-reshi yo-ro-ko-bashi ta-ta-kai ka-chi no*
Oh, how full of bliss, how delightful 'tis, When you fight, to win the day!



*Momo chi-ji no Ad-a wa mina A-to naka nari - nu*
Hundreds went before, Thousands are no more, All our foes have passed away.

Though precociously intelligent, Zaburo was not too old to play with toys, and the gift of a pop-gun cemented our too brief alliance.

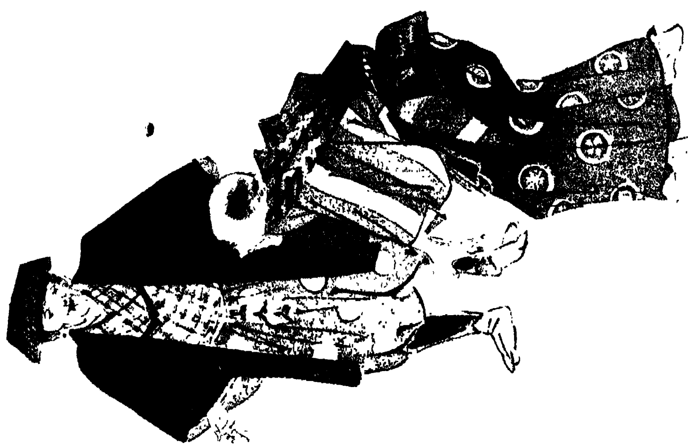
In the middle of July falls the Buddhist festival of Bon, better known as the Feast of Lanterns, when the souls of the dead revisit the living. The decay of religion has unfortunately robbed this touching celebration of its more striking features. Formerly on the eve of the *fête* the graves were hung with lanterns, that the spirits might be lighted on the way to their old homes. On the day itself the villagers fasted, but left before the household shrine flowers and water and a little food, while they went out towards evening and danced in a large circle, singing quaint songs and clapping their hands to the strains of drum and flute. Then, when the time was come for the spirits to return, on river and stream were launched a fleet of tiny boats of straw, each with its paper lantern, in which the invisible visitors were wafted back to shadow-land. These things are done no more, or only in remote rural districts. Danger to shipping caused the floating of little fire-ships to be prohibited in the ports, while at Tōkyō the ceremony of "opening

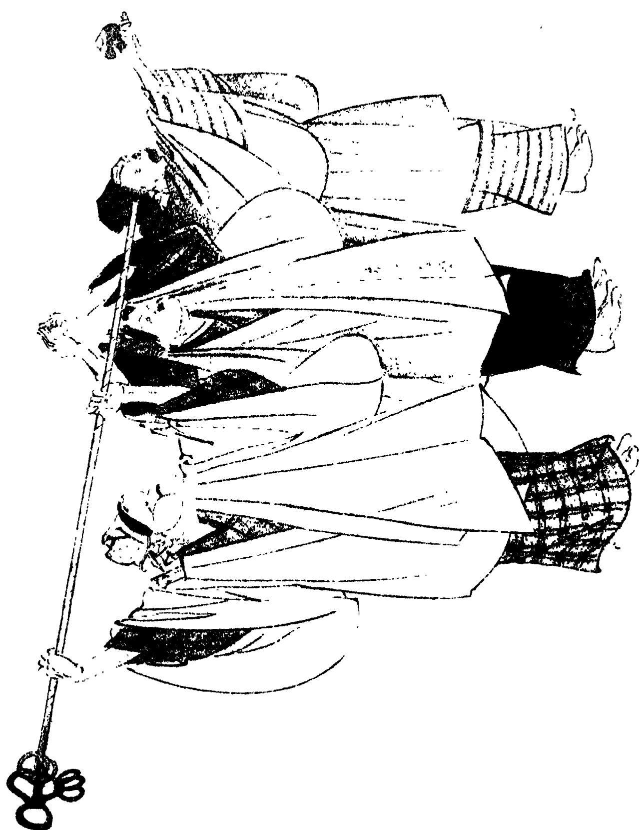
the river" covers the Sumidagawa with gay pleasure-boats, and in the secular crackle of fireworks the sacred associations of the day are forgotten. In the villages the peasants have not abandoned the dance, which town-folk delegate to geisha, but its date varies from district to district, and I did not witness one until a month later at Akakura. Yet Ikao has contrived to preserve the more pious aspect of All Souls' Day by two simple services of devotion in graveyard and temple.

By the merest accident I caught sight of a group of women passing through a dark grove of cryptomeria, whose lofty aisles are sown with innumerable tombs. I had often been there, allured by the tranquil images of Buddha, whose face and posture seemed eloquent of everlasting repose. To-day their silent watch was broken by the passage of many rustling skirts and gentle laughter, for even in such places the childish *musumé* does not deem it sinful to smile. I struck across the wood and recognised the sister of my landlord, Kindayu San, accompanied by three or four serving-women. One carried a kettle of boiling water, another some sticks of incense, and a third some flowers. Permission being accorded to join them, I went along with them to more than thirty graves. On each a little water was poured, a little incense burned, and the prayer, "Namu Amida Butsu," uttered. The humblest of the dead was equally honoured with the nearest kinsman, and, after relations by marriage or adoption had been visited, the last to receive salutation was a *banto*, or temporary bookkeeper, who had died four years before after eight years' service. "Will not the honourable stranger also make a prayer?" was asked, and I

complied, repeating "Namu Amida Butsu," "I adore thee, O Eternal Buddha," in the hope that their god would understand that his claim to adoration by barbarian lips lay in the kind memorial offices which his faith inspired. Many of the graves lay so far apart that we had crossed two valleys and found ourselves some miles from home at the luncheon-hour of noon. So we entered the nearest tea-house and were served with tea and sweet cakes. As the proprietor had a small stock of sacred images for sale, I bought for a souvenir of the day two clay foxes with tails gilded at the tip, the snarling door-keepers of the rice-goddess; but Inari must have rejected in anger my mock homage, for three weeks later in a carefully packed *yanagori* I grieved to find chaotic "fragments of no more a" fox.

That afternoon I remarked an unusual stir and clatter of small feet below my balcony. Crowds of children, on foot or slung behind the patient backs of mother or elder sister, were making their way to the large school-house, which stood a few yards beyond and below the southern entrance of the hotel. It being holiday time, I had never seen any of the scholars, and the sole occupant of the spacious playground was a weather-beaten stone effigy of Jizō in a red cotton night-cap and yellow bib. This wet saint (*nure-botoke*), as the Japanese laughingly call such unhoused divinities, had always excited my sympathy, for there he stood without his five companions' society, exposed to rain and wind, disregarded even by the very infants whose patron saint he is considered to be. At any rate, I could see no pious heap of pebbles laid on his knees, though the neglectful little ones would be glad enough, on reaching the dry bed of the





River of Souls, to seek refuge in his large *kimono* sleeves, when mischievous demons should demolish the pebble-heaps which it would be their duty to pile up there as the penalty of childish faults. But perhaps they were too busy playing to remember him during the holidays, or perhaps they had unbelieving teachers who connived at their neglect. I indulged a faint hope that public expiation was to be made, and that the toddling crowd would lay some tribute on his faithful lap. But its destination was a temple situated below the school-house, and as it swept merrily by grotesque, deserted Jizō I fancied that the stone features grew more rigid and grey beneath the cotton night-cap, his consolatory proof of at least one worshipper.

Having set a few stones on his pedestal, I followed the rest to a small temple, which was surrounded by women and children. On a raised platform, which formed the temple-floor, about a dozen priests, resplendently robed, were moving in rotatory procession and chanting passages of the Buddhist canon. The babies were gazing open-eyed on the bright embroideries of instruments and vestments, while as many people as could be accommodated were allowed to occupy mats at one extremity of the platform. Among them a place was obligingly made for me, and soon after I had taken my seat the priests also sat down to listen to a discourse from a young and eloquent preacher. I had been in many temples, and watched the crowds making prostration, buying holy knick-knacks, and flinging copper coins into the broad-barred money-boxes, but this was the first sermon I had the good fortune to hear. Continually reverting to the theme, "Mina sekai no hito kiodai"—all beings

in the universe are brothers—the orator spoke long and earnestly of the unseen ties which bind the living and the dead, of the infinite chords and scales of existence, of the love and goodwill which no creature was too humble to show or too lofty to accept. Sometimes an old man groaned, and sometimes an urchin was removed screaming, but most of the listeners remained passive and stolid till the end. Then babies were hoisted, farewell bows were exchanged, and the congregation melted away. If you ask me why so many children were present, I can only suppose that they were attracted by the excitement of novelty. There was none of the bustle and glare which make a *matsuri*, the ordinary temple *fête*, one glorious saturnalia of piety and merriment, when theatres and booths, covered with wonderful paper toys and every known variety of sweetmeat, block the approaches to the sacred building. In this the Buddhists greatly outshine their more austere Shintōist rivals. Probably nine-tenths of the peasants are in agreement with an old man with whom I conversed after an impressive service at Hommonji, the chief temple of the Nichiren sect. As we descended the temple-steps I asked him why he preferred Buddhism to other forms of faith. "Because," he answered, "it is more amusing."

I was awakened the next morning by a peculiar rocking sensation, as if my bed were a cradle swung to and fro by invisible hands. Then I saw the *obbasan*, an old woman who waited on the European guests, rush, frightened and half-dressed, along the verandah. It dawned on me that this must be a long-hoped-for earthquake, and as the vibrations ceased after some seconds, which naturally seemed of unusual length, I was slightly disappointed. Residents say

that the fear of earthquake, unlike the fear of other dangers, is increased rather than lessened by experience. Certainly the Japanese themselves, in spite of their fatalism, realise to the full the terrible penalty of inhabiting a land of volcanoes. That day little else was talked of. Two little girls, who had been adopted by Kindayu San after losing their parents in the great shock, followed by a tidal wave, some years before, became objects of particular attention. Now, Ikao is perched on the flank of a volcano, and the site of an extinct crater is occupied by the beautiful Haruna Lake, which I had not yet visited, so gladly I accepted the proposal of Nitobe San to walk there. I had made his acquaintance a few days previously on the archery-ground, adjoining the hotel, where he displayed remarkable skill in handling the unwieldy bow which is still a popular and effective weapon in the hands of Japanese archers. Indeed, he was only surpassed by a *samurai* of about fifty, who hit the bull's-eye four times out of five. Yet his appearance was far more studious than athletic, for Nitobe San attended the medical school at the University of Tōkyō, and when he pored over German text-books through gold-rimmed spectacles had already the reassuring gravity of a family doctor.

Our way lay first along the Yusawa ravine, but, instead of continuing to the source of the mineral spring, we ascended a steep and tortuous path to the right, which at every turn disclosed new aspects of the woods and valleys beneath. Often we would stop to gather tiger-lilies or yellow roses, that shone like golden stars in a sky of emerald foliage, for, except where the carefully kept track wound in and out, the mountain side was swathed in evergreen. Issuing at

length from the trees, we reached a grassy plateau, on which is the grazing ground of the milch-cows that supply Ikao. To the left is a curious conical hill, known as the Haruna Fuji; and other masses of irregular rock are partially covered with lichen, so as to produce the effect of ruined castles half hidden by clambering ivy. Indeed, my first impression was that these were relics of feudal fortresses, until closer inspection revealed the freakish cleverness of Nature. Two miles of level walking brought us to the lake, which is simply a large tarn surrounded by small bosom-shaped hillocks at such regular intervals as to repeat the irresistible suggestion of human ingenuity. It might have been a giant's silver shield embossed upon the border with knobs of jade.

Gladly we rested at the tea-house on the margin, for hot sun and loud cicada had been fatiguing eye and ear. After lunch I took a bathe from the only boat to be obtained, though its crazy, water-logged condition left much to be desired. However, the boatman did his best to remedy the deficiencies of his craft, and, as I undressed, hung each garment in succession round his neck, to prevent their being soiled and immersed, as they otherwise certainly would have been. Much refreshed, I persuaded my companion to extend our walk to the ancient Shintō temple of Haruna, not more than a mile and a half away. We climbed to the top of Tenjin-toge, at which pass the road becomes too narrow and precipitous for rickshaws, as it plunges suddenly into a curiously imagined glen. Never had I seen such bizarre configuration, such eccentric juxtaposition of tree and stone. Pines darted like dragons from the cliff; rocks started like mammoths from a thicket, or lowered savagely across the torrent, which

raced or trickled below. It seemed as though the spirits of water and wood and fire had suddenly been petrified at the supreme moment of a great triangular battle, and waited, weapon in hand, to spring once more each at his adversary's throat. Evidently the old temple, dedicated to Ho-musubi, the god of fire, and Haniyasu-hime, the goddess of earth, was the citadel, defended and attacked by these weird combatants. Towering cryptomeria stood on guard around it, and huge rocks, tip-toe on tenuous bases, attended the word of command to crush the curving rafters. It needed but one signal from the imprisoned fire-god, one movement of the volcanic earth-goddess, to fill that fantastic glen with the clamour and *débris* of primæval war. Elsewhere we might have admired the carven serpents, that writhed so realistically about the side-beams of the porch. At Nikkō or the Nishi Hongwanji temple in Kyōto they might have impressed us as masterpieces of creative carpentry, but at Haruna the comparison was too trying. It was hopeless to compete with God's more monstrous curios.

Here at last was a Shintō stronghold which did not seem abandoned and desolate, but bore traces of frequent worshippers. Above the sacred cisterns waved blue towels, suspended after purification; at the feet of a Shintōised Jizō rose a mound of propitiatory stones; on the *kagura-dō*, or dancing platform, an old woman, the priest's wife, began her symbolic dance. As she slowly revolved, shaking her bunch of bells or waving her fan, she chanted words so venerable that all clue to their meaning had been lost. Yet, in her faded garb and shrunken person she personified more fitly the solemn contortions of a dying faith than the smart

young priestesses of Nara in their red silk trousers and snowy mantles of flowered gauze. When those tripped forward, with thickly-powdered faces and chaplets of artificial wistaria, their garish aspect transformed the temple to a tea-house, but in this sombre fastness at the heart of Haruna we seemed to behold a very sibyl of aboriginal Japan. The assistant priest was affable but ignorant. A copy of the "Kojiki," earliest of known records of the Way of the Gods, was kept there, he affirmed, but he had never opened it and might not show it to strangers. In winter it was terribly cold, and snow-storms would sometimes cut them off from all communication with the outer world. When floods made the torrent impassable the senior *kannushi's* children were obliged to do their lessons at home. But summer brought troops of pilgrims to the valley, and their offerings sufficed to keep the little band of guardians at their posts. "Are you never afraid," I asked, "of the earth opening and the rocks falling? Only this morning we felt a slight shock of earthquake at Ikao." The young priest smiled gravely. "No," he answered. "For more than five hundred years the *kami* have protected their holy place. Why should we be afraid?"

We made a small donation, and received in exchange a printed promise of Ho-musubi's and Haniyasu-hime's blessing, to which our names were appended. Then, turning our backs on that grim sanctuary, we climbed slowly back to the Tenjin Pass. As we re-traversed the plateau of Little Fuji, Nitobe San described the student's life at Tōkyō. Between 1890 and 1898 their numbers had increased from thirteen to nearly nineteen hundred, so that a second university was shortly to be inaugurated at Kyōto. But of

course the Red Gate (as the Tōkyō University is familiarly called) would remain the classic portal of modern learning. The college of medicine, in which his own studies were pursued, is entirely under German influence: none but German and Japanese professors give instruction. In the other faculties of law, engineering, literature, science, and agriculture, English teachers predominate. Most of the students work desperately hard, but enjoy great liberty. The majority are poor, and some have very rough manners. The Emperor was informed on one occasion by his Chief of Police, who had been summoned to receive orders to repress anti-foreign demonstrations, that "the offenders were invariably either rickshaw-men or students." Their life is far more gregarious than that of Oxford or Heidelberg or the Sorbonne. In the small block of residential buildings within the university grounds six or eight young men read, eat, and sleep in one room. These are a privileged minority of scholarship-winners, and are subjected to rather irksome restrictions in the matter of visitors and late hours. But the larger number live in lodging-houses, where practically no more control is exercised than over any other class of citizens. Competition is so severe that posts cannot be found for any but a small fraction of the budding doctors, lawyers, and journalists who hope to make a living in those professions. In consequence the disappointed graduates turn *sōshi* and live by their wits as spies, agitators, actors, authors, or even as itinerant musicians. Naturally, extreme views are adopted and discussed with the fervour of youth. The wildest socialism, the narrowest nationalism, find apostles. Though full of enthusiasm for most Western innovations, Nitobe San was strongly opposed to the

substitution of Roman characters for Chinese ideographs. In vain I pointed out to him how the latter blocked the pupil's advance and impeded international intercourse. He feared that such a step would not only tend to destroy communion with the past, but would also diminish the probability of that alliance between China and Japan which was cherished as the only means of checking Russian aggression. I formed the conclusion from this and other conversations that the salient qualities of a Japanese student are independence and passionate curiosity. It did not surprise me to learn afterwards from an English professor that his classes had summaries of his lectures printed at their own expense to facilitate the acquisition of new ideas in a foreign tongue.

While we had been talking of his vices and his virtues, the gregarious student had invaded Kindayu's. On returning to the hotel we encountered a band of eight or nine stalwart young men wearing blue cotton *hakama* (trousers so ample as to resemble a divided skirt) and armed with small hammers. They had come to geologise, disappeared on long expeditions during the day, and only returned at a late hour. As they shared a room and were by no means uproarious at night, the other guests were scarcely conscious of their presence. I think, however, that two pretty schoolmistresses, the wives of officers in the army, who had carefully abstained from making the acquaintance of any other visitors, welcomed the arrival of these ardent scientists. Their rooms adjoined, and sitting on the threshold, that no beholder might misinterpret their platonic comradeship, they indulged in intellectual flirtation—a joy too subtle for the understanding of their unsophisticated sisters.

Ikao was in truth a microcosm of Japanese society. Representatives of nearly every class came and bathed and went their way refreshed in spirit, if not cured in body, by the restful babbling water. One day an ex-daimyō, who had held high office in a recent Cabinet, arrived with a small retinue of relations and dependants. Quiet and dignified, he was only to be distin guished by a greater sobriety of manner from less aristocratic neighbours. Occasionally odd instances of polygamous experiment attracted general remark. A Tōkyō merchant came accompanied by an elderly wife, a blind baby, and two mistresses who had formerly been geisha. The three women were on excellent terms, and disputed only the privilege of spoiling the thrice-mothered child. Every evening for them was a "musical evening," as the man had a good voice and the geisha were expert *samisen* players. Nitobe San described the *ménage* as "a little barbarous." But, whether his opinion was shared by many or few, it made no difference in the reception of the new-comers, who were treated with the same frank courtesy as less numerously married folk. Indeed, frankness and propriety were marked characteristics of this hydropathic paradise. If the bathers imitated Adam and Eve in simplicity of *tenue*, their behaviour, too, like that of our first parents before the Fall, was faultless. Conversation was entirely unembarrassed and perfectly decorous. The very publicity of this hotel life was a guarantee of morality. And, in fact, one could see that beneath extreme freedom of intercourse careful etiquette was observed. Neither young girl nor married woman ever went out alone: the tea-party never became a *tête-à-tête*. The *shōji* of the apartments were generally half open; the amusements

were such as to assemble and introduce the visitors to one another. Dancing and flirting, as practised in English watering-place or French casino, were unknown. If the men desired other female society than that of their own class, they could seek the *geisha-ya* or *jōro-ya.* If many of the diversions were childish, those of Brighton or Trouville cannot rank as intellectual exercises. It was a lazy, healthy, happy sort of paradise, and I did not live in it long enough to discover the serpent.

## II

On the seventh day of the seventh moon I bade farewell to Ikao, and, loaded with little presents, descended slowly to Takasaki. Regret at leaving that delightful haven was soon lost in conjecturing the solution of an astronomic mystery. Village after village flaunted a galaxy of paper stars, which flecked the green background of interminable trees with dancing flakes of red, white, and blue. At every door stood a bamboo-stem crowned with a cluster of five-rayed stars, each ray being made of paper of a different colour. From this astral chaplet long streamers floated in the breeze, like the *gohei*, or cut paper inscribed with prayers, before a Shintō shrine. At Takasaki station I met Nitobe San's sister-in-law, O Sen San, who was returning to her husband's house at Tōkyō, while the student himself had gone to the more efficacious hot springs of Kusatsu. Being fellow-travellers as far as Akabane Junction, I begged her to reveal *en route* the meaning of those starry signals which continued to flutter gaily in every district we passed, as though our train were freighted with royal passengers. Then I learned that all pious folk were celebrating that day the festival of Tanabata. The white streamers corresponded in number with the children in each house-

hold, and on every one was written a poem desiring happiness, especially good fortune in love, for the child whose name was appended. More than this she did not know, but a handsome young priest, who had remarked my zeal for knowledge, kindly volunteered the following legend :

THE HERDSMAN AND THE WEAVER.

"Long ago, as Chinese sages tell us, there dwelt in Heaven a herdsman and a weaver on opposite sides of the celestial river. All day the herdsman tended his cattle, and was far too busily occupied to think of taking a wife. All day the weaver sat at her loom, making clothes for the Emperor, and this labour took up so much of her thoughts that she even neglected to adorn her person. Then the Emperor, remarking her diligence and pitying her loneliness, sent for the herdsman and said : 'Inasmuch as ye are both so devoted to my service, I will that ye shall henceforth be devoted to one another. I give thee this woman in marriage.' So the girl crossed the river, and no married couple ever lived more happily together. But after a time the Emperor perceived that the marriage, though it might be a good thing for them, was an evil thing for him, since the weaver began to neglect her work, and his clothes, which had formerly won the admiration of his courtiers, showed signs of hasty and careless weaving. At this the Emperor grew very angry, and sent for the weaver and said : 'Inasmuch as this marriage has been a joyful thing for thee and for thy husband, but a woeful thing for the Emperor of Heaven, I bid thee recross the river and return to thine old home. Once a year, on the

seventh day of the seventh month, the herdsman may pay thee a visit, but on every other day in the year let him see to his herding and thou to thy weaving.' So the girl returned to her old home, and the river flowed once more between herdsman and weaver; but every year, when the feast of Tanabata comes round, husband and wife are happy together. Therefore, all who desire their children to be fortunate in their love ask fortunate stars to shine upon them. Now, the Emperor of heaven is God; the celestial river is the Milky Way; the herdsman is a star in Aquila, and the weaver is no other than Vega, brightest and luckiest of stars."

I thanked the priest for his pretty legend, and cautiously approached the subject of religion, asking if he had studied Christianity, and to what cause he attributed its slow progress among his compatriots. He answered that two facts, in his opinion, contributed greatly to its want of success. The first was its extraordinary similarity to Buddhism. The ideas of a saviour of mankind resigning kingly power to become a wandering beggar; of virginal motherhood; of trinitarian godhead; of the beauty of holiness and charity, love to men and kindness to animals; of heaven and hell, as the populace conceived them, though in reality but intermediary stages to the ultimate Nirvana;—these, and the miracles attributed to the *rakan*, or disciples of Buddha, which bore such remarkable resemblance to the wonders attributed to Christian saints, prayers for the dead, and monastic institutions;—indeed, almost every salient doctrine of Christianity, as taught by priests of the Roman See, could be found with more or less modification in one or other of the numerous Buddhist sects. Why should

a believer, then, apostatise from the faith of his forefathers to adopt a foreign creed so similar to, and yet so remote from, his own? I found that his conceptions of Christianity were derived from a Romish priest, whom he had known in the island of Yezo. There was also a patriotic reason which struck me as rather unusual. The loyal Japanese believed that their Emperor was descended from the gods, and in the "Kojiki," which is regarded with the same reverence by them as the Bible by Europeans, many actions implying divine power are said to have been performed by such beings as the Heavenly-August-Sky-Luxuriant-Dragonfly-Youth, by the Great-Refulgent-Mountain-Dwelling Grandee, and by other *kami*, or superior ones ("them that are above us," Mrs. Dolly Winthrop would have said), to whom it was impossible to refuse the rank of deity. But the missionary said, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me," which commandment imposed on the convert the necessity of becoming disloyal as well as an apostate. Yet, so tolerant were Buddhist and Shintō believers, that they did not subject a pervert to any sort of persecution. They practised and allowed entire freedom of belief. I replied that, granting his premisses, his conclusions were irresistible, and we parted excellent friends.

At Akabane Junction I took leave of O Sen San, and met by appointment Mr. Richard Bates, whose acquaintance I had made about three months before in a curio dealer's shop at Kyōto. As we had agreed to take the waters of Akakura and Dōgō together, I must apologise to him and to the reader for interpolating a brief description of this invaluable companion. His accomplishments were so numerous that I shrink from detailing them, but they were all of such a nature

as to enhance the pleasure of travelling. He was a good cook, a good nurse, a good photographer; he had the infallible *flair* of a curio hunter, and while less wily collectors were hesitating and beating about the bush, he would mark his prey—perhaps an old lacquer bowl, perhaps a bronze incense-burner—pounce on it, appreciate it, depreciate it, and by sheer force of will-power whisk it away to his lair before the dealer had made up his mind on the subject of price. He had two deficiencies, which were also virtues on occasion: he easily lost command of Japanese idiom and British phlegm. As he chose to consider me a fair linguist, it fell to my lot to translate arguments and accusations which were violently impossible to reproduce. However, I did my best, and was rewarded by many scenes of rare comedy. I often thought he would have done better to rely on himself, since discussion gave the seller time to invent incredible merits for his wares: at such times one glance or gesture of contemptuous disbelief inspired more respect for the buyer than languid protest, and that fiery fashion of raiding a china shop, of assessing the stock with the rapidity of a freebooter, and helping himself to anything that took his fancy, was so appalling to the deliberate, ceremonious vendor, that I believe goods were frequently yielded up in terror and a vague hope of appeasement. Not that Mr. Bates invariably got the better of the bargain. It is my belief that many geese sully with unsuspected falsity the whiteness of his swans. But for him every purchase was a swan, and, if you hinted otherwise, the crime of a Frenchman who should express an unpatriotic belief in Captain Dreyfus' innocence were light in comparison. I seldom committed that impru-

dence, but indulged a secret hope that one robbery balanced another, and that in the end the spoils of war were equally divided. Commercial habit does breed an instinct of distrust, which many tourists would find discomforting; but this instinct was so agreeably modified in my fellow-countryman by generosity and justice, that on the whole we made as many friends as enemies. If a landlord tried to cheat us, we told him so with reprehensible directness; if he treated us well, we gave him a handsome present, and were as pleased as Diogenes would have been had he pursued his famous quest by the light of a Japanese lantern.

Men, honest or dishonest, interested us but little that day, so absorbingly magnificent was the scenery. At Akakura we should be in sight of the Sea of Japan, while Tōkyō faces the Pacific, so that our route ran north-west at an angle of about forty-five degrees, very nearly from coast to coast of the main island. The train would have to climb to a height of 3080 feet, crossing by means of the Usui Pass the volcanic backbone of mountains which culminates in Asama-yama (8280 feet), the largest active volcano in the country. As we steamed slowly up the steep gradient to the grassy levels of New and Old Karuizawa, a series of twenty-six tunnels, bored at such short distances from each other as to resemble the disjointed sockets of a gigantic telescope, provided intermittent glimpses of jagged cliffs and terrific gorges. Far below lay green valleys and plains, threaded by silver rivulets and dotted with infinitesimal châlets; beside us, densely-wooded slopes; to left and right, on the horizon, Myyōgi San and the Kōtsuke peaks rose frowning to the sky. Many passengers descended at Karuizawa,

for it stands on a lofty moor, where cows and wild flowers flourish to the joy of European children. Here the wise missionary builds his villa and transports his family in the hot months. Donkeys and bicycles, bestridden by sturdy, blue-eyed youngsters, excite wonder in the meek pedestrian native, while papa, untrammelled by clerical attire, manfully mounts his five thousand feet and gazes into the red sulphureous crater. Has not a local parodist thus celebrated the annual exodus?

"When summer strikes Tsukiji
With rays, which frame in gold
That glory of Meiji,
Our evangelic fold,
To colder heights and calmer
Each missionary flies;
He loves Asama-yama,
For nearer Heaven it lies."

Alas! the pagan mountain-god, who when he speaks will fulminate in fire and ashes, has been dumb for more than a hundred years. He allows the preachers of an alien creed to fill their lungs with his life-giving air; he knows that their ingratitude will take the form of denying his divinity. "And yet God has not said a word."

From Karuizawa, without breaking the journey at Ueda or Nagano, we advanced more quickly to lower ground, until the rapid torrent of Sekigawa, which divides the provinces of Shinshu and Echigo, arrested our attention and signified the nearness of our destination. Leaving the railway at the little station of Taguchi, we ascended in rickshaws the zigzag path which conducts the pious to the sacred summit of

Myōkō-zan. This mountain, on which snowy patches still defied the August sun, is only one hundred feet lower than Asama-yama, if the alleged height, 8180 feet, may be considered accurate. On the north-eastern slope of this easily-climbed volcano lies the hamlet of Akakura, from which rich plains stretch smoothly to the sea. On clear days the island of Sado is dimly visible. Hither come the farmers and traders of the western villages and towns, bringing sometimes their own provisions and demanding only sleeping accommodation. The chief hotel, one-sixth of the size of Kindayu's, possessed a bath of its own, in which a dozen persons could bathe, but in all the others the guests paid a small fee to use the public baths, which dignified the single street with all the glory of carven cornice and stained glass. No other Europeans invaded this unfashionable spa, whose boiling springs, pellucid and blue, are credited by the peasantry with marvellous curative virtue. Foreign food is not to be procured, but we supplemented the rice and millet with tinned meat and stewed fruit. Thus fortified, we found no great difficulty in renouncing the more highly civilised distractions of Ikao.

Geisha, dramatic reciters, jugglers, and itinerant musicians never reach such solitary heights. But, happily for us, the *Bon-Odori*, those antique dances, which should have been danced on All Souls' Day by the modernised Ikao folk, began in this neighbourhood two nights after our arrival.* The landlord requested a contribution of forty *sen* (about fourpence), which we readily doubled, for the benefit of the performers. Then ensued a long wait, for, if Japanese city-people are dilatory, no adjective exists which could do justice to the country-people's contempt for celerity. Always



Dancers at Feast of Lanterns

accurate, Murray very properly translates *tadaima* (immediately) by "any time between now and Christmas." First one lantern entered the courtyard; after half-an-hour, another; one by one the young men and maidens assembled; forty minutes more elapsed before the musicians could be induced to appear: at last a flute-player and a drummer squatted on a mat in the centre, while the dancers circled slowly about them. Youths and girls wore a blue kerchief tied round the temples: they revolved, as in a game of "Follow my leader," without ever touching hands; two steps forward, a half-turn, two steps back, and at irregular intervals a clapping of hands. Such was the simple measure. But the waving of arms and the graceful free gestures of these rustic *coryphées* were only less effective than the strange chanting, which rose or sank in volume as the number of participants increased or fell away. And what do you suppose they sang? Something in the following vein, one might imagine:

"While we loudly dance and sing,
Spirits of our dead return,
Guided, where the lanterns burn;
In the houses they will find
Rice and water left behind;
Then sail in boats of straw away,
Until next *Bon-Odori* day.
Peasants, come and join the ring!"

Lines like these might emanate from an Arcadian singer of Fleet Street, but the daughters of Akakura must have lost all sense of the solemn festival they were affecting to celebrate. What they sang was this:

"My lad is handsome,
My lad is comely;
He has no money;
Sad is my heart."

And again:

"Only to meet thee
Troubled my heart is;
When the dance ends, I
Ask to be thine."

For custom in those parts has gradually established the right of Love to oust Death from his old prerogative. Dancing enables the lovers to find each other more easily than at other times. Courtship is the recognised sequel of the August revels so eagerly anticipated, so long remembered. The love-sick maiden is the first to avow her passion, as little girls choose their partners at a London party. Perhaps the gentle neglected ghosts bear no resentment, but are consoled by the hope that one day it will be their turn to live again as happily as these their descendants.

Acquaintances were not as easily made in Akakura as in Ikao. The Kogakurō, as our hotel was called, contained but few other guests, and we occupied the two bedrooms which formed a sort of annexe, apart from the rest of the building. In the public baths at certain hours one was sure of meeting from twenty to thirty bathers of all ages and either sex, but they were extremely timid, kept silence when we entered, and did not respond to friendly overtures, so that we ceased to intrude upon their privacy. One old man, however, was very fond of calling and cross-examining the strangers. He had been a *samurai*, and at the age of seventy-six retained full vigour of mind and body. I should have given him ten years less. The landlord expressed his opinion that this visitor was a

Government spy, and cautioned us against talking too freely. But, as it happened, the caution was superfluous, for the dignified old fellow spoke in such queer dialect that I could understand very few of his remarks, and conversation soon lapsed into an interchange of bows and smiles. Only one other circumstance occurred in the Kogakuro, during the fortnight we spent there, to excite interest. One morning we found the cheery little landlord very depressed because a fraudulent guest had decamped during the night without paying his bill. Of course, he had only to shoot aside the wooden shutters, and the further feat of "shooting the moon" presented no difficulty.

In this dearth of human subjects to study we acquired a habit of making daily expeditions to neighbouring localities, and were often repaid by beautiful sights. Within two hours' walking distance lies the lake of Nogiri, which is larger than Lake Haruna, but not so prettily environed. On a densely wooded islet stands a temple of Benten, "the goddess of luck, eloquence, and fertility," to which we were ferried across by an obliging schoolboy. Before it stand two immense cedars, of which one boasts a girth of twenty-seven feet. A long flight of steps leads from the shore of the island to the shrine, and, viewed from the summit of the steps, the belt of mountains which rim the horizon amply rewards the climber. Except for this view, however, Nogiri is in itself an ordinary unromantic piece of water.

Far more exceptional is the important town of Takata, several hundred feet below the level of Taguchi, from which the railway descends a steep valley between mountain walls precipitously grand. Thousands of feet above snow is surmised, waterfalls

are conjectured, but between them and the crawling train push masses of impenetrable forest. Passing Arai, with its petroleum springs, we reach flatter ground and enter Takata, once the castle town of the Sakakibara family, which shared with three others the privilege of providing a regent during the minority of a Tokugawa Shōgun. Traces of its old magnificence and of the Tokugawa patronage exist in a whole suburb of Buddhist temples, adorned in many cases with the Shōgun's crest. They are large, richly ornamented with good carving, and approached by avenues of cryptomeria. Since the Restoration and the Shintōist reaction the fame of the Takata temples has decreased, but their splendour is only to be eclipsed in that part of the country by the celebrated Zenkōji at Nagano. At the back of one row of these temples runs a stream, spanned by as many little bridges. I never expected to see the college "backs" of Cambridge so admirably parodied.

The railway line is here the dividing-line between sacred and profane. To the left of it the Buddhist monks traffic in holy wares; to the right cotton and cotton-cloth and a species of muslin peculiar to the place compose the stock-in-trade of half the shopkeepers. The latter reside in homogeneous batches, as in feudal times: all the mercers in one part, all the curio-dealers in another, and so on. But the most curious feature in the town is the wooden projecting roof conterminous with the street on either side, which enables the pedestrian to perambulate the main thoroughfare under shelter of an arcade. These are not found in the eastern or central provinces, and have been adopted on account of heavy snow-drifts, which in winter render the roads impassable. We had

cause to be grateful for this Echigo custom, as it enabled us to explore the town without being drenched by a heavy, inopportune shower.

Our longest excursion was to Naoetsu, a rising seaport at the mouth of the Sekigawa and the present terminus of the Tōkyō and Karuizawa line. Though it has long been a port of call for steamers which ply on the western coast, it presented the appearance of a new, unfinished town. Two months before a disastrous fire had consumed three-fourths of the houses, which were rising phœnix-like from the charred relics of their own *débris*. But fires are so common in these flimsy, inflammable habitations that one ends by regarding them as inevitable, as instruments of the universal law of reincarnation, which applies equally to men and to the works of men's hands. Every twenty years the two great temples of Ise are demolished and reconstructed as antique ordinance requires. Humbler buildings cannot expect to escape the fiat of periodic resurrection. There is, however, little of interest at Naoetsu, unless it be the hardy fisher-folk and field-labourers. We drove to a fine temple of Kwannon and some tea-houses surrounded by tasteful gardens overlooking the sea. But we had seen their analogues before : never had we seen in Japan, except in the case of the wrestlers, such sturdy human frames as these men and women of Echigo display. Husband and wife, naked to the waist, strain beneath a common yoke and draw ponderous carts to market. Their bronzed busts and blue cotton *hakama* make grateful patches of colour between the hot sky and dusty road. My photographic friend could not resist the chance of "taking" an Amazonian mother disdainfully recumbent on bent elbow and suckling her child. As she

lay supine and heavy-featured, she resembled a Baudelairian giantess in

> "The deep division of prodigious breasts
> The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep."

Could she really be of the same race as the fragile, geisha-fairies of the Myako-odori? Her photograph had better claim perhaps to the title of *miyage* than the crystal and jade *kakemono* weights, which we bought from a specious hawker on the cliffs. He who would conform to Japanese etiquette, with its charming code of trifling generosities, is sorely perturbed by this problem of *miyage*. The dictionary defines it clearly enough: "*A present made by one returning home from a journey, or by one coming from another place—generally of some rare or curious production of another place.*" Now, I was perpetually "coming from another place," and the search before I left it for "some rare or curious production," which would serve as a present for Ashikaga or Tōkyō friends, baffled at times even my insatiable curiosity. The hawker's streaked pebbles were pretty enough as pledges of transitory kindness, but the souvenirs most vividly stamped on the tablets of remembrance by the glaring sunlight of Naoetsu in August show a vision of brown sea-goddesses against a turquoise sea.

## III

THE last lotus had shed its stately coronal of broad petals before our short stay at Akakura came to an end: business detained us in the capital throughout the September rains; when we determined to take the waters of Dōgō October was well advanced, and the hills were already flushed with reddening maple-leaves. As we sat on "the bridge that is joined to heaven" and gazed into the maple-lined ravine, which is crossed and crowned by the monastery of Tōfukuji, we seemed to be watching the slow sepulture of that lingering summer beneath a pall of fiery foliage. Yet we knew that, though there on the hills around Kyoto autumn was mistress of the woods, there still reigned on the sheltered shores of the Inland Sea a summer of St. Martin, the diaphanous ghost of summer, mild and tender in heat and hue. There and then our trip was planned. We would skirt its northern coast from Kōbe to Hiroshima, spend a day in the holy island of Miyajima, and thence take boat to Mitsugahama, the nearest port to the Dōgō baths, whence a second boat would take us back to Kōbe. Thus the circuit of the eastern waters of the sea between Shikoku and the Main Island might be accomplished in a leisurely ten days. For the moment, however, we might as well

fall in with the spirit of soft melancholy which all persons of sensibility were bound to assume in the presence of maple-leaves, unless centuries of minor poetry should be coarsely disregarded. What season could be fitter for making pilgrimage to Sen-yūji, the burial-place of the Emperors? It is true that a sinister sentence in the guide-book said, "As neither the tombs nor the various treasures of the temple are shown, there is little object in visiting it." But for all we knew, the warning might be piously designed to save a sacred privacy from the more vulgar type of tourist, whose eyes are blind to immaterial things. At any rate, that was the time, if ever, to test the meaning of Murray's discreet dissuasion.

It certainly required no slight effort of imaginative sympathy to appraise at its historic worth a most paltry wooden bridge, devoid of grace or ornament, which seemed a rustic plank in comparison with the Shōgun's red-lacquer *Mi Hashi* at Nikkō, so finely poised and firmly flung across the foaming Daiyagawa. But that was worthy of the military usurpers, who took the substance of sovereignty and left its shadow to their nominal sovereigns, while this is only *Yume no Uki-hashi*, the Floating Bridge of Dreams, aptly symbolic of the recluse *rois fainéants*, absorbed in sentiment and moonshine. Here, we are told, as the midnight mourners bore along their dead emperor to sleep with his fathers, they would throw down a little fruit, some libatory cakes, into the whispering rivulet. Then steep and dark before them rose the narrow road, which terminates in a large hollow hewn out of the hillside to be the cradle of the sceptred heirs of the sun-goddess. Like the palaces in which they lived, their houses of death are clean and august.

The shrines are of plain white wood, of the sort else used only in Shintō temples; the paths, scrupulously kept, are strewn with small white pebbles and wind spirally up mound after mound into the shadow of thick pines. Six centuries of royalty are buried in that white city with no other token of their rank than strict seclusion and austere simplicity. Each group of tombs is enclosed by a high wall, and on every gate is the sixteen-petalled chrysanthemum. There is no glitter of marble or gold, as in so many burial-grounds of monarchy, no fulsome eulogy on staring tablet, but, shrouded in the same mysterious obscurity as had enveloped for the nation their half-monastic lives, the Tenshi, sons of heaven, seem fittingly interred in that precise maze of ordered tranquillity half-way between the sky and their dearly-loved Kyōtō.

I could not bring myself to pass Ōsaka on the way to Kōbe without visiting the temple of Tennōji, where Mr. Lafcadio Hearn gathered some of his happiest "Gleanings in Buddhist Fields." Though the children's chapel has been so touchingly described by him that any other writer may well shrink from following in his footsteps, a rapid impression of a fugitive glimpse will be pardoned and more than justified if it should induce the reader to re-read his more elaborate account. An enormous temple, Tennōji lies on the very outskirts of the town, and, after traversing innumerable canals, one is still a little puzzled to locate the *indo-no-kane* among wide courts grouped about the central colonnade. After some searching we discerned a man and woman kneeling on the threshold of a shrine, in which a wrinkled priest in shabby brown vestments was reciting a

prayer. Drawing nearer, we noticed that the man was weeping and the woman held in her hands a baby's *kimono* of brightly coloured material, which soon after she handed to the priest with a few copper coins. He took the garment, folded it carefully, and placed it on a shelf. Then, raising our eyes from the personages in this pathetic scene, we observed for the first time the chapel itself. The altar bore no image of Buddha flanked by gilt lotus or vases of natural flowers, but from cloth to ceiling it was covered with a bewildering pyramid of dead toys. Almond-eyed mannikins and stiff-jointed maidens, dolls of all classes, richly or penuriously dressed, seemed to stretch imploring arms and to fix halluci-nating eyes on the beholder; drums and trumpets, paper ships and indiarubber balls, masks and picture-books and rattles—all the motley companions of vanished children were huddled together like contorted imps in a chaotic pantomime. Massed and motionless in the twilight of their recess, they had the air of dead things—the shells and figments of faithful toys, whose spirits had followed the babies' souls to paradise, that the little hands which had clasped them night and day in "this miserable, fleeting world" might not be quite comfortless in their strange new nursery. The lesson would not be lost on heartbroken mothers who parted here from their own most cherished hopes more fragile than these brittle playthings. The roof was hung, the side shelves were piled, with tiny dresses, pendent or folded; and, most curious of all, the bell-rope, that summoned Shotoku Taishi, the saintly prince, to con-duct the dead infants to God was strung with over-lapping woollen bibs—yellow and red and green—the clumsy counterparts, these, of aureoles. But while

we had been enthralled by this canonisation of dolldom the priest had been writing, and now handed to the mother a slip of paper attached to a thin wand of bamboo. Bowing low, she took the paper, pressed it to her forehead, and crossed the enclosure to the stone chamber known as the Tortoise Tower, for there those who look down over the circular balustrade into a central cavity will perceive clear water running from the mouth of a stone tortoise. Into that sacred stream which flows from earth to heaven the paper drops, being inscribed with the new name which is bestowed on every believer after death; and the poor woman goes away not a little comforted, for now at least her child is sure of an orthodox introduction to paradise. Thus neither babe nor emperor is exempt from etiquette, whether life or death be the master of ceremonies. Inequalities persist in the very funeral rites, though in their hearts the celebrants must feel that the geisha's flower-song is of universal application:

> "Peonies, roses,
> Faded, are equal;
> Only while life blooms
> Differ the flowers."

The beauties of the Inland Sea have been so often and so graphically described, that detailed praise is superfluous. Every one has heard of the thousands of islets, on which are perched villages, villas, and pines innumerable; of the hillsides, geometrically subdivided into rice-fields; of the junks with pleated and divided sails, which dart like white birds through the exquisite blue plain; of the strange mirage, which throws upon the sky at certain hours, when the heaven above and the waters beneath melt into a vast

silver-grey mirror, the shapes of phantom archipelagoes suspended in mid-air. To those who have seen it and are familiar with the fans, the *netsukes*, and the tea-cups, which reproduce favourite designs of pictorial art, only one adjective, vague yet precise, will occur: this pocket-Mediterranean is essentially Japanese. It is an ornamental piece of prettiness, designed by the Celestial Painter in one of his most Japanese moods, for in it you will find the cardinal characteristic of the national taste, its subordination of the sublime to the dainty, of big effect to graceful detail, its inevitable preference for miniature and vignette. One critic has said that such art "is small in great things, great in small things"; another, that the Japanese "admire scenes, but not scenery." Both these dicta could be applied to the Inland Sea, were it not that Europeans admire it more than the natives, but the charm which it exerts is undeniably akin to the spell of those workers in silk or clay or ivory who achieve a maximum of beauty in a minimum of space. The Norwegian fiords, the Italian lakes, the Ægean and Adriatic Seas, all present at some point or other some grandiose aspect, but the channels which lie between Shikoku, Kyūshu, and the Main Island never threaten or impose; they are simply a soft fluid setting for precious stones of varying size and colour.

Most famous of these insular jewels is Miyajima. As no boats were running thither from Kōbe, we travelled by the San-yo railway as far as Onomichi, skirting the coast so closely that we hardly once lost sight of the sea. Though sorely tempted to break the journey for the purpose of visiting the great feudal castles of Himeji and Okayama, we pressed on until

the bay of Fukuyama, glittering like molten fire in a superb sunset, was hailed with rapture and relief, for the train journey had been hot and long, and we welcomed the prospect of repose. One of those delicious, indolent evenings, when the traveller reclines on piled cushions, drinking tea or *saké*, until he be roused from waking dreams by the low laughter of attendant *musumé*, demanding permission to strew the beds and light the lanterns, would have formed an excellent climax to that fatiguing day. But I never dared anticipate repose in the company of Mr. Bates, who was apt to burst into sudden flame on the slightest provocation. And during that week provocation lurked in two hotels out of three. The guide-book describes Onomichi as "a bustling, prosperous place": it may be "prosperous"; it is undeniably "bustling." We were barely out of the train and had just set foot in the straggling main street, when two hotel touts seized us by the arm, jovially aired some broken English, and deposited us with our bags on the steps of a large hotel. "Ask the price!" shouted Mr. Bates, "ask the price! I have never yet entered an hotel without knowing what I have to pay. Ask the price!" I complied, but the landlord with soft, evasive phrases, wafted us to an upper floor, while my companion smouldered. Suddenly a chair and table appeared. "Take them away!" he shouted, "take them away! I know the trick. They will make us pay double, and I refuse to be swindled." This time we insisted on knowing the charges, and the proprietor, as we expected, demanded three times as much as we had now become accustomed to pay. We protested. He assured us that "honourable guests from Yokohama and Kōbe" never paid less, but we replied that Kōbe

and Yokohama were nothing to us, who always paid Japanese prices for Japanese accommodation. Finding him impervious to reason, we shouldered our bags and marched out of the house. Then he consented to receive his due, and reinstalled us on our own terms. But the hotel girls were cross and discourteous, the native visitors noisy, the food bad and badly served. As a last attempt to get the better of us, the landlord affirmed that now there was no chance of a boat being despatched to Miyajima before the following afternoon, and that the information we had gathered from a casual shopkeeper the night before, that one would sail at eight o'clock in the morning, was erroneous. But Mr. Bates had been compelled twice before to spend an extra day in one of these seaside hotels, on the plea that the boat had gone, or would only go, apparently, at the landlord's bidding. Smiling, therefore, but without hesitation, we made our own way to the wharf at seven o'clock and took our own tickets, that there might be no collusion between the hotel boy and the official who booked passengers. At eight o'clock we steamed away from Onomichi. Through clustered islands our tiny steamer threaded in and out, until Kure appeared, an important arsenal at the foot of the Aki Hills. Here we discharged some hundreds of copper slabs, and while that slow operation was in progress were amused by the animation which prevailed on the men-of-war and on the numerous sampans plying between them and the shore. About four miles away on the island of Etajima stands the Imperial Naval College. When this and other points of interest had been indicated to us by polite fellow-passengers, our attention was riveted on the labourers, who jerked the slabs from hand to hand

and piled them on the floor of a barge in symmetrical heaps. The "chantey" which they sang to lighten the labour was simple and monotonous, consisting of two words, which sounded absurdly like "Hong Kong" and "Shanghai" repeated *ad infinitum*. At last we continued our voyage, but were again subjected to a long delay at Hiroshima, where we landed and beguiled the tedium of waiting by chaffering with bum-boat women for sweets and chestnuts. The town stands far back from the water, and a causeway three miles in length runs out into the spacious harbour, formed by the delta of the Otagawa. As this is the most busy commercial centre west of Kōbe, there was plenty of movement: rows of boats were loading and unloading, rickshaws driving up perpetually from the town, while shrill-voiced youngsters did a brisk trade in fruit and vegetables. At the risk of being left behind, my indefatigable companion made a dash for the distant shops, and returned triumphant, hugging in one arm two loaves of bread and in the other a dilapidated Buddha, whose grimy gilt was irresistible to the collector. His disgust when I guessed the exact price he had paid (about five *yen*, or ten shillings), and refused to believe that it could be worth a penny more to any one, was too deep for words.

Darkness had fallen when Miyajima was reached, and as we were rowed ashore the outlines of temple and grove were shrouded in gloom. Only the *colossal torii* loomed black against the shimmering water, while all that lay behind was covered by the shadow of climbing forests. We took supper at an hotel near the entrance to the temple-grounds, and were then conducted by two of the landlord's daughters on a tour of

inspection through the main street. We discovered a curio-shop, of which the proprietress set such extravagant value on her wares that Mr. Bates at once was lured into hot discussion. Night interposed, and at an early hour, before I was well awake, I heard the resumption of battle below my balcony. The proprietress with gentle laughter and firm accent extolled her treasures; the would-be purchaser, in nervous tones which tingled with cupidity and despair, attempted in vain to cheapen them. His patience was rapidly giving way, and very soon he cried out for his interpreter to descend and assault the enemy. But this time I deliberately closed ears and eyes, feigning sleep. I had not come to that holy island to fight for curios, and though I had attained the knack of giving the lie courteous to crafty dealers, I shrank from translating rough language to a woman. Fidelity was routed by chivalry. They finished the struggle without my intervention, and victory remained with the lady.

When I descended, the defeated combatant was seeking consolation in photography. And seldom had his camera been confronted with more beautiful pictures. The winding valleys and soaring rocks converge at an elevation of more than a thousand feet on a little shrine, in which has been burning a sacred fire for more than a thousand years. From the opposite shore, as one traces the salient features of this evergreen island, all the details—streamlet and temple-roof, cliff and maple and pine—merge in a majestic harmony of serried line and luxuriant colour. But on the island itself one is drawn, as by a magnet, to the great temple of Itsukushima Hime, which, being partly built over the water on piles, seems at high tide, like the Breton vision of Is, to rise from the

depths of the sea. At all times the *torii*, or wooden archway, which stands before this Shinto temple is partially submerged, and Hiroshigi in his fifty-four *meisho*, or views of Japan, gives such prominence to it, that the long galleries and avenue of stone lanterns, as well as the central hall, from which the colonnades diverge like wooden arms, bent to embrace the incoming tide, are barely suggested. Daimyō, Shōgun, and Emperor have vied with one another in decorating this temple, and the successive chapels are hung with paintings by famous artists from the sixteenth century to the present time. Many quaint customs, formerly regarded as conducive to the purity of a holy place, are still observed. Neither death nor birth is allowed to sully its eternal immunity from change. When either is anticipated, the patient is ferried across to the mainland. Dogs are forbidden, but deer roam the streets and feed fearlessly from the hands of tourist or pilgrim. All day the temple-courts are thronged with worshippers, and sometimes at night, when a pious noble or rich American affords himself the sight, the lit lanterns of stone or bronze, which line the approaches to the temple, define the interlacing courts and bridges in traceries of fire. But this illumination we had not the good fortune to see.

Another temple on a neighbouring hill, though less beautiful, is equally unique. It consists of a vast platform, from which spring twenty-four massive columns to support the roof, whose only ornamentation on the interior, if ornamentation it can be called, is a frieze of wooden spoons, some small, others enormous: they are nailed there, or on the columns, as the donor's caprice dictates, and confer comparative immortality at trifling cost, for each is inscribed with an autograph.

Thus the ingenious Japanese have found a way of diverting and profiting by that first infirmity of ignoble minds, which robs St. Paul's of dignity and desecrates Westminster Abbey with such legends as "Peter Jones from Hampstead" and "Eliza Smith of Bethnal Green." Much impressed by this strange custom, each of us bought a spoon and, veiling our vulgarity in Latin, suspended this device from the right-hand pillar of the porch :

Venit, Vidit, Oravit,
O. E. R. B.

For two months I had been haunted by visions of the bridge-Kintaikyō, as it seems to have haunted the landscape-painters of Japan. I remembered it as one of the most remarkable in Hokusai's series of "A Hundred Bridges" ; I had another marvellous drawing of the five arches overwhelmed by a snow-storm and apparently detached from both land and water, for Hiroshigi understands the isolation of his subject from irrelevant detail as few others, slaves of perspective, would dare imagine. If uneducated eyes took the picture to represent a peal of blue bells, sprinkled with cotton-wool and straddling through space, so much the worse for uneducated eyes. But at any rate, being so near, I resolved to dispel vision by looking on reality, and spent half a day in visiting Iwakuni. We were obliged to leave our rickshaws at the foot of Katō Kiyomasa's towering temple that overlooks the almost waterless bed of the Nishikigawa, for none but a pedestrian could climb the huge arcs, thirty feet long, which spring in five bounds from shore to shore, like the curves of a switchback railway. Then the faithful camera was brought into play, and a bevy of



Kintaikyō Bridge

perplexed ducks were hustled into the foreground, with the inevitable result of attracting several loiterers to share with them the glory of being photographed. These had to be politely expelled, and in the end several excellent views were taken. But not one of them conveys the fantastic liberty of that flying bridge so realistically as the snowscape of Hiroshigi.

Lulled by the honest countenance of our courteous landlady into misplaced confidence, we were astonished by her presenting on our departure a bill more exorbitant than that of the hotel-keeper of Onomichi. We expostulated, and repeated the terms named by her clerk the night before. At once the amount was cut down to half and the lesser sum accepted with no gratitude or resentment. Mr. Bates is furious, and delivers a lecture on probity; but I cannot bring myself to regard these bland banditti, who extort without violence and restore the booty without a murmur, as on a par with the cheating innkeepers of other lands. Their motive is probably either religious or patriotic, perhaps both. Some one must have told them that foreigners are only permitted by autochthonous gods to visit Japan on condition of enriching its inhabitants. By overcharging the tourist, then, they are pleasing their gods and serving their country. Their compatriots are protected by legal prices, publicly posted in every inn, but they know that the barbarian cannot read official notices, and quixotic indeed would it be to enlighten him. To me such *naïf* graceful swindling (when exposed and thwarted) is more delightful than churlish, prosaic probity.

Returning to Hiroshima, we thence took steamer to Mitsugahama, one of the chief ports in the island of Shikoku, whose mineral baths were the goal of our

voyage. Had time allowed, we would gladly have visited all the four provinces of this magnificent island—provinces which in earlier times were known as "Lovely Princess," "Prince Good Boiled Rice," "The Princess of Great Food," and "The Brave Good Youth." But we had only leisure to do homage to Iyo-Ehime, the Lovely Princess, who amply justified her title by the loveliness of her domain. Between her territory and that of Tosa or Take-yori-wake, the Brave Good Youth, whose sons are to-day the staunchest advocates of progress, runs a mountain ridge, varying in height from three to four thousand feet, so richly covered with forests that not only are the pines, maples, and alders as plentiful as elsewhere, but with these is intermingled an endless host of beeches, oaks, and horse-chestnuts. Except in the neighbourhood of Akakura, we had not seen a finer stretch of mountain-scenery.

But we never came close to these wooded heights, for Dōgō is only a short distance from the seashore, and is reached in half-an-hour by what I can only describe as a toy train. We crept into a first-class carriage, and just managed to avoid bumping our heads against the low-pitched roof. The fare was on the same scale as the compartments, for the cost of the ticket-was three *sen* (farthings). The rickshaw-men were polite and reasonable, the landlord of the Iwai-ya both affable and honest; in a word, we had left the track of long-suffering and all-corrupting tourists, and had reached one of those districts, so pleasant to discover, where manners are as yet unspoiled by money. Delighted with our lot, we settled down to three days of paradise regained.

Our first care was to discover the bath-house. In

front of the hotel rose a mansion of pine, surrounded by iron railings of curious pattern, a line of storks in zigzag flight, and surmounted by a stork of gold with outstretched wings. The Governor's house, we thought, or perhaps a court of justice, resplendent with carven symbol to impress the natives with reverence for the new *régime.* But no: this was the principal bath-house. As we passed from storey to storey and remarked the beauty of rafter and balustrade, my companion, who speaks with knowledge, declared that he had never seen such superb carpentry. In many of the chambers were flowers and *kakemono* by modern painters; in short, we had found a more lordly palace of bathing than even Ikao could boast. The baths were of granite and the dressing-rooms hung with silken curtains. As we had paid the highest tariff, ten *sen* (about twopence-halfpenny), before entering the bath, we were served by daintily-robed waitresses with cherry-blossom-and-water, a rather saline concoction prepared from the national flower. When we issued from the hot salt waters the same attendants brought tea and cigarettes. Enchanted with our first experience of Dōgō fashions, we returned to the hotel and demanded of the landlord what other sights the town possessed.

The public garden, the wood-carvers' shops, the big temple of Ōkuni-nushi and Sukuna-bikona, which crowns a hill on the outskirts of the town, were duly visited, and pronounced inferior to those we had seen elsewhere. But O Yoshi San informed us at dinner that every stranger who came to Dōgō was considered unlucky if he departed without seeing and hearing two beautiful sisters, geisha of shining notoriety. We sent a summons at once, and by good luck it happened

that one hour of their deeply engaged evening was at our disposal. Our room was brightened up with flowers and sweetmeats, *saké* and cigarettes were lavishly provided, cushions set and lanterns lit. The geisha were announced by their professional names—White Jewel and Young Butterfly—made smiling obeisance to the "honourable strangers," and took their seats in the centre of the room, while their duenna, the Katti Lanner of Shikoku, whose pupils had spread the fame of their teacher all over Japan, remained respectfully in the doorway. The age of Young Butterfly cannot have exceeded thirteen years. She wore a white silk *kimono,* heavily embroidered with gold, and gold dragons on a green sash chased one another round her slender waist. In her coiffure was an ivory pin, terminating in a miniature birdcage, from which a red tassel fluttered defiantly. Her pantomimic dances (in which she required occasional prompting) represented the wooing of a coy damsel and the capture of a standard in the Chinese war; her childish emphasis of amorous and martial gesture was extremely piquant. White Jewel was, however, not only a clever artist but a most intelligent woman. About ten years older than her sister, she was dressed far more simply. Her *kimono* was of black *crépon,* her sash of iris-coloured brocade, and her hair had no ornament but a purple iris. She sang, like all her tribe, with nasal intonation and harsh lower notes, but her smile when she talked was as bright as her wits, quick to grasp my questions and explain the meaning of her songs. Indeed, I owe to White Jewel some of the prettiest instances of popular *dodoitsu* collected in a previous chapter. She was very pleased with her calling, which she had found lucrative, and

was not offended by the assertion that most people considered geisha to be like cats, sly and treacherous; otherwise, how was it they had acquired the nickname of "Nekko" or "Pussie"? She replied by singing a quatrain which conveys in the original two meanings for every line:

'Ware of the Pussie!
Pussie, seen smoothing
Coat of striped velvet,
Trimming her claws.

'Ware of the geisha!
Geisha, seen folding
Soft-striped *yukata*,
Binding her shoes.

At this point Mr. Bates manifested a desire to bask in the rays of White Jewel, and completely ousted me from favour by a fraudulent piece of palmistry. As he traced the lines in her sensitive hand he discovered pledges of prodigious prosperity—rich lovers, increased fame, long life, and ultimate marriage to a deputy-judge! The only prediction which missed the mark was a prophecy of twin daughters, who should rival and perpetuate the glory of White Jewel and Young Butterfly. The Japanese consider it rather gross and catlike to have more than one child at a time. White Jewel made a grimace of playful disgust and offered to sing another song, which would be the last, as other houses had engaged her to appear at ten o'clock and at eleven. It was exactly half-past ten; if she went now, her punctuality would be unimpugned. So she took leave of us with a chansonette as dainty as her own personality.

LIGHT LOVE.

If love be thoughtless,
Then is love shallow;
Though love be shallow,
Do not forget.

We devoted the second day of our visit to Matsuyama, the capital of the province of "Lovely Princess," not more than four miles from Dōgō. There is little to be seen there, however, except the castle, one of the largest in Japan, and some excellent curio-shops, in which the zeal of my companion was rewarded by some precious finds. Leaving him to indulge his master-passion, which I found less amusing than the pursuit of living curios, I laid siege to the castle. At the bureau where tickets are to be obtained many officials referred me to one another, and requested me to wait until certain formalities were complied with. After two hours' stolid patience the fortress capitulated, and I was assigned to the care of a gallant sergeant, who spoke a little English and proved a most competent guide. From the summit of the tower a fine panorama was visible: below us the fertile Matsuyama plain stretched away to the shore of the Inland Sea, and on the opposite side the horizon was shut in by forest and mountain. To tell the truth, my conductor's account of the castle's history, as illustrated by its structure and some surviving weapons of war, interested me much less than his own exploits. For had he not with his own hand slain five Chinese braves in the battle of Port Arthur? My compliments on his heroism must have touched his heart, for, turning suddenly, he grasped my hand and cried: "I like you. You shall be my friend. I will dine with you." This abrupt proposition at once solved for me the embar-

rassing question of remuneration. I could not press surreptitious silver into the palm of this obliging lover of England and slayer of Chinamen, but a friendly dinner would put us on terms of franker intimacy. So we descended the winding path from the ramparts, crossed the moat, and marched home to the Iwai-ya. We drank cherry-blossom and *saké;* we bathed, and dined off the best fare which our host could provide; we discussed the character of native and foreigner, arriving at the conclusion that, while the best type of Japanese inhabited Shikoku, the wiliest and worst of foes were Russian. We had not time to go deeply into ethnology, for at half-past eight my guest buckled on his sword and with many protestations of affectionate regard returned to barracks.

No shadow of trickery marred our joyous reminiscences of Dōgō. When we left the landlord presented a bill so ridiculously low, that we bestowed on him as much again in tea-money. Not to be outdone, he loaded our departing rickshaws with four bottles of beer. And the photographer, whose camera was worth a fortune to him as a means of gratifying all sorts and conditions of men, took an excellent group of that smiling host and his cheery household.

The voyage to Kōbe was no less agreeable. We had for fellow-passenger a distinguished middle-aged officer, who had fought on the losing sides in the revolution and the Satsuma rebellion headed by Saigō Takamori, whose grave we had seen at Miyajima. Experience had long since convinced him of the folly of anti-progressive movements, and he realised as clearly as the most democratic reformer that national security was best served by adopting Western ideas. We had no idea of his rank until a small boat put off at

Tadotsu, in which were three officers of inferior grade, who had come to escort him ashore. From his seat in the boat he waved his hand genially to us, while the men pulled in to harbour, but the three officers remained standing, as unmoved by the shock of the waves as by the rattle of Chinese artillery.

Kōbe received us, weary and late, with hospitable arms. In that prosperous port, so rapidly distancing Yokohama in commercial importance, an English colony is solidly entrenched with pews and cricket-bats and pianos. I went to the club, and was at once in England. *The Saturday Review* was reviewing and *The World* revolving on the same lines as when I was last in Fleet Street. Mr. Bernard Shaw was still unmasking demerits in Shakespeare, while Mr. William Archer was inventing merits for American comic opera. In a moment of nostalgia I sauntered into a well-filled church, whose congregation were listening with rapture to a beautiful rendering of Gounod's "There is a Green Hill": finally, I learned at a friend's table that a cricket-match between the ladies and gentlemen of Kobe was the burning topic of the week. Between Mr. Bernard Shaw and Buddha (vegetarians both), between Gounod and geisha, between batting and bathing, lay the gulf which separates the hard-hitting West from the lotus-loving East. I could not bridge the gulf without a violent effort. In fact, I felt a little ashamed on mixing with my fellow-countrymen, so pious and strenuous and practical. While they had been working and playing as only Britons can, I had utterly forgotten that any country except Japan could enthral and stimulate. I had been taking the waters—of Lethe.

# PLAYING WITH FIRE

# PLAYING WITH FIRE

## I

THIS is the love-story of René Beauregard and O Maru San. It does not illustrate the cynical conceit of a French dandy, æsthetically explaining and profaning love to amuse an indelicate public, nor does it demonstrate the folly of mixed marriages, in which nuptial ceremonies, high-flown speeches, adultery, and suicide are hypocritically served up to suit the British palate. It is the straightforward story of an ordinary attachment in the Far East between two rather bad and rather good friends of mine, whose notions of "good" and "bad" as translated into deeds were lax, but, in their eyes and in that region, not absolutely damnable.

M. René Beauregard had been in Tōkyō about a fortnight, when I found him one evening at a print-seller's shop in the Ginza, surrounded by an inquisitive crowd of admirers and much embarrassed by inability to declare his meaning in Japanese. He was accompanied by an hotel-boy, who, knowing no French words but *Oui, monsieur*, and *Bon jour*, recognised me with relief and solicited assistance. I was able to extricate him from the curiosity of the bystanders and

the plurality of prices to our mutual satisfaction, for we returned together to the Métropole, the richer by some rare prints and the promise of congenial companionship. Literary reminiscence furnished many bonds of common interest. We had witnessed, it seemed, simultaneously several incidents which marked the waning of old and the rising of new constellations in the firmament of French art. The *première* of Rodenbach's "Le Voile" and Rostand's "Les Romanesques," the funeral of Paul Verlaine, the students' repudiation of Brunetière and acclamation of Zola at the Sorbonne, the banquets to Puvis de Chavannes and Emile Verhaeren, had strangely enough united us in the same company without opportunity of introduction. But community of tastes counts for less in friendship than charm of character. What particularly pleased me in M. Beauregard was a modesty, not too common among his compatriots, and a chivalry towards women which the Quartier Latin had failed to destroy. I had known so many *petits féroces* (as Daudet called them), vaunting their talents and their *bonnes fortunes*, for whom a mistress ranked somewhere between an advertisement and an absinthe. He was not an *arriviste*, then; but neither was he a worker. Too self-critical to write badly, too lazy to write well, he ended by not writing at all, and, as his means permitted him to play the *rôle* of spectator, he followed various movements in art and letters with amiable, intelligent passivity. He had come to Japan with the object of studying on the spot the Kōrin and Shijō schools of painting, but found his progress much hindered by ignorance of the language, which he had not seriously tried to learn. As we were both anxious to see the *Matushima*, or Pine Islands, perhaps the

most lovely of the *Sankei*, or Three Views, which the Japanese celebrate above all others, it was resolved to travel there together in search of grammar and scenery.

About the grammar he was rather fastidious. A personage of high rank, whom he had met at an Imperial garden-party, had said jokingly: "Why not follow the example of M. Pierre Loti and find a second 'Madame Chrysanthème'? We call such persons in our idiom 'pillow-dictionaries,' and they are the most instructive manuals in the world." The young Parisian was, of course, neither shocked nor offended by the suggestion. Not only had he no moral scruples himself about forming temporary ties such as nine Frenchmen out of ten contract before marriage, but he had come to a country, or so he had been told, where such ties were neither illegal nor dishonourable, but openly recognised, and where a mistress did not forfeit her chance of ultimate marriage when the relationship should be dissolved. But the idea of buying a mate as one buys a horse or a picture was repugnant to him, and he preferred to wait a while, in the hope that Fortune would provide an occasion of affection preceding purchase rather than of a purchase which might or might not precede affection. The geisha of the capital did not attract him: they were too openly venal or brightly conspicuous for his quiet taste, which desired gentle companionship without such publicity as the appropriation of a Tōkyō geisha would involve. So, for the moment, scenery took precedence of grammar.

The journey to Sendai on the Northern Railway is generally tedious, but was made more so by delays and uncertainties of transit owing to extensive inunda-

tions of the Tonegawa. Many passengers contemplated the advisability of quitting the train and proceeding by relays of boat and rickshaw. Happily this troublesome alternative was avoided, and we contrived to reach the dull but important capital of the Rikuzen province shortly before midnight. The next morning we travelled by a branch line to Shiogama, the little port on the bay of Sendai from which passage is taken to the hamlet of Matsushima or the more distant Ishinomaki. We chose the latter route, since it traverses the entire archipelago and gives a more complete idea of the number and disposition of the Pine Islands. Legend counts them to be precisely eight hundred and eighty-eight, and, if one disappear, eaten by the sea, another pushes up its head, conveniently severed by a sword of water from some broken peninsula. As the rocks never increase nor diminish in number, so the thousand pine-trees, which start from crag or shelf in every conceivable posture, are never more nor less than one thousand. From this banquet of volcanic tufa the ravenous Pacific had crunched odd morsels, leaving for future meals bizarre and bitten fragments, as capricious in shape as its own appetite. Unfinished bastions, wild arches, irregularly tunnelled rocks, cone and staircase and plateau, lie densely or sparsely scattered over an expanse of forty miles, like a herd of amorphous sea-monsters, badly made and willingly abandoned to the solvent action of time and tide. But then, as if to apologise for the Originator's clumsiness and to prove that his failure may have been expressly intended to ensure their success, on the backs and in the crevices of the else uncouth stone creatures wave the thousand arms of pine, softening rough contours with their

clinging green, protesting and protecting with graceful curve, or beckoning with siren gesture to passing mariners. Every island has its name, rooted in historic or legendary allusion. To the Japanese one has suggested "Buddha's entry into Nirvana," another "The island of question and reply," while a third group is symbolic of "The twelve Imperial consorts." But our Western eyes could well dispense with that strange bias of Eastern fancy which prefers to associate form with meaning: for us it was enough to glide slowly through the haunted waters, to watch the blue waves foaming at the island's edge or leaping in the sunlight to meet the pine's tentacular caress.

From the last of the islands to the mouth of the Kitakami River, on which Ishinomaki stands, is a rough stretch of sea exposed to the full force of the Pacific rollers. Our tiny steamer was buffeted by wind and rain, and my companion suffered such agonies of sea-sickness that it took him two days to recover health and spirits. By good luck we found in the Asano-ya one of those cosy and coquettish hostelries which only Japan can boast, where the eye is as constantly charmed by good taste as the body is comforted by good cheer. The sliding doors which divided our apartment from others had panels of white paper, flecked with clouds of gold-dust and framed in black lacquer. In the *tokonoma* or alcove stood a pink-flowered shrub and a peacock of bronze beneath a beautiful painting by Kano Tan-yu. In vain we offered to buy this *kakemono* from the landlord, or the screen, which displayed fighting dragons on one side and a noble tiger on the other. They were heirlooms, which his children must inherit. Nearly everything was pretty in the Asano-ya, except O Maru San. She

was the landlord's niece, an orphan Cinderella, condemned by destiny to wait on her uncle's guests. While her better-looking sisters had found husbands, she trotted contentedly about her work, laughing a great deal and singing snatches of song. She was about four feet ten inches in height; her face was too large and too round, though this fault was somewhat redeemed by fine teeth and soft eyes. She tried to atone for plainness of feature by elaborate coiffure and punctilious toilette; but, do what she would, she could not escape from the category of ordinary squat village girls, who remain at home while their prettier neighbours fill the tea-houses and geisha-houses of Tōkyō. Her parents must have had excellent judgment, for instead of calling her Lily or Chrysanthemum or some other flower-name whose irony must have pursued her to the grave, they hit upon O Maru (Miss Round), an unromantic but felicitous description of her person and character. She had no angularities, moral or physical, but was just an elastic, docile ball of Japanese womanhood, both useful and playful; one of those domestic conveniences which Confucian moralists regard as admirably adapted to promote the peace and happiness of man.

From the moment of René Beauregard's entrance until his departure from Ishinomaki, O Maru devoted herself to his service. While his illness lasted she sat beside him, bathing his forehead and anticipating his desires. When he grew well enough to take part in the expeditions which I proposed to neighbouring temples or islands, she was waiting with his shoes and hat on the threshold, bowing low as he went out; and, when he returned for the evening bath, she attended him with towel and soap, as assiduously and with as

little false shame as Nausicaa attended Odysseus. Observing that he seemed anxious to learn the language, which she was quite incompetent to teach, she managed, with much laughter and many misunderstandings, to increase his vocabulary. She was particularly proud of having interpreted two inscriptions which hung framed in the vestibule of the hotel. One, equivalent to "Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest," was thus worded:

"Asa okuri yu mukai."

More literally it reads, "At morning, honourably send on his way; at hot-water time, honourably receive." The other was more difficult to render. We disputed two versions, of which I commended the first to M. Beauregard's notice, while preferring the second in our common interest. Like many maxims, it was plausibly vague:

"Omoi yokoshima nashi."

Could it mean "Love without naughtiness"? Or had it the particular application of "Hospitality without fraud"? I hoped the latter.

We remained for seven days at Ishinomaki, charmed with the busy life of the place, which owes its prosperity to slate-quarries and salmon-fisheries, with the boats for ever passing up and down the Kitakami, with Kinkwa-zan, "the golden-flower mountain," that sacred island on which in ancient times no women might set foot, though the deer roam freely round the pilgrim's circuit or ascend to the shrine of Watazumi-no-Mikoto, the Shintō god of the sea. During this week two circumstances revealed to my French friend the fact that O Maru was actuated by quite as much tender-

ness as dutifulness in her solicitude for his welfare. One day a Norwegian captain, coasting from Sendai to the northern island of Yezo, put into harbour for a day, and proposed to the landlord that the girl should take passage with him for a couple of months in return for fifty *yen* (about £5), but she displayed strong repugnance to this not ungenerous proposition. On another occasion O Maru, having innocently introduced a handsome brunette, her bosom friend, to Monsieur René, who did not disguise his pleasure at the presentation, was discovered by him at the foot of his bed convulsed by tearful jealousy. At first she would only give negative replies to his questions. "Nakimasen" ("I'm not crying"), and "Shirimasen" ("I don't know why I'm crying"), she said. But at last she gave the reason. "Because you are now tired of O Maru, and will honourably take notice of O Kiku." I must suppose that he found a way of reassuring her, as the next day they were warmer friends than ever; and it became plain to me that a dictionary, plainly bound but a devoted pocket-companion, had been providentially deposited for M. Beauregard at the Asano-ya, Ishinomaki. Indeed, the book was more anxious to be bought than the buyer to acquire it, for as soon as the date of our return to Tōkyō was given out O Maru begged her foreign lover to take her with him, and extracted a promise that, if her family made no objection, as soon as he had made suitable arrangements he would send for her to continue the studies which had begun so pleasantly on the banks of the Kitakamigawa.

## II

It is one thing in Japan to make a bargain; it is another and far more difficult thing to secure its fulfilment. Though by no means infatuated with O Maru, Beauregard had been touched by her devotion and amused by her simplicity. What seemed to him certain was that he had merely to send word to Ishinomaki, and the faithful girl would fly to his side. But this showed his utter ignorance of Japanese character and methods of procedure. Before the two were reunited, an interchange of six letters and thirteen telegrams, spread over six weeks, taught him some useful lessons touching the unimportance of time and the futility of haste.

About ten days after our return to the capital, he wrote a long letter to the Asano-ya, in which he offered to take O Maru with him for two or three months if her uncle made no objection, and enclosed several *yen* for travelling expenses. Four days passed and brought no reply. Then he wired: "Have you received money? When are you coming?" and was somewhat pacified by the answer: "Money received; will come soon." His knowledge of the language was not then fixed, or he would have found little consolation in the treacherous words, *sono uchi*, soon. Another

two days and the uncle sent a very polite letter to the following effect. They had all been much honoured by the honourable stranger's presence* in their humble home, and thanked him for his great kindness to O Maru. She would very much like to travel with so distinguished and noble-hearted a person, nor had he, the uncle, any objection to her doing so. But he would like to call august attention to the fact that he had an adopted son who wished to learn French and would make an excellent guide, if permitted to join the party. He hoped the proposal would commend itself to so kind a friend of the family as Borega Sama had shown himself to be. Instead of pleasing "Borega Sama," this offer to include an "adopted son" in the compact distinctly frightened him. He knew cases of Europeans who had been led by liking for a native girl to burden themselves with her incalculable relations, but he did not consider that a trip of two months should be encumbered by any such superfluous attendants. So he wrote a courteous refusal. By this time the vagueness of *sono uchi* preyed on his intelligence, and, when its elasticity stretched to eight days, he wired once more: "What do you mean by *sono uchi?* When will you come?" And the answer appeased him: "Will come before the end of the month." But the end of the month brought a second most affable letter from the host of the Asano-ya, in which he expressed his intense anxiety to oblige the honourable stranger in every possible way, but it so happened that just at that time O Maru could not be spared, as his humble house was full of reverend pilgrims on their way to Kinkwa-zan, the golden-flower mountain, and these monopolised her services. He therefore would send back the money which Borega Sama had so

kindly placed at her disposal, unless he would wait a few weeks longer, when she could join him, as the time of pilgrimage would be over. We both regarded this letter as a polite intimation that the incident was closed. Either O Maru had misled her friend when she assured him that her uncle wished her to take the opportunity of travelling with a "noble-hearted person," or the old man had formed other plans for his niece's future which did not concern us. In either case Borega Sama resolved to finish the matter. He wrote briefly but plainly, being a little sore at so much tergiversation, that he had no wish to inconvenience any of his kind friends at Ishinomaki, whom he should always remember with grateful pleasure, and, if he ever returned to Sendai, would revisit them. Then he turned his attention to prints and curios.

Many circumstances render the collector's life particularly exciting at the present time. Good finds become scarcer every year; the chief dealers in Tōkyō and Kyōto send their agents not only all over Japan, but also to Europe in the hope of redeeming lost treasures. Sometimes an old family or impoverished temple is compelled by misfortune to part with the works of old masters; sometimes the new masters of the art of forgery palm off surprising imitations which deceive even the elect. The jealousy of rival collectors, the artifices of rival dealers, the uncertainty of losing by one purchase what you gain through another —all these aspects of the game render it quite as amusing as other forms of speculation. To Beauregard the beauty of his favourite designs naturally outweighed their commercial value, but it was impossible to escape the fury of competition which disturbed the *attaché* in his bureau and the professor in his

study. Every morning Minami San or Ohara San appeared with a stock of tempting pictures, and as they perfectly understood the art of playing off one buyer against another, you often paid too high a price or delayed decision until a bolder and perhaps more foolish gudgeon took the bait. Minami San was a thin, melancholy man, with carefully plaistered hair and irreproachable attire. He had the air of letting things go at an appalling sacrifice, so that at times you almost hesitated to haggle with him. He seemed too gentle for his trade. But Ohara San roused defiance and inspired respect. He was an obese, jolly man of shrewd capacity. As he sat on your floor drinking tea or taking snuff, his patience and persistence were admirable. He interspersed the bargaining with merry anecdotes and jovial information, as though he rather sought your company than your cash, but nothing escaped his twinkling eye, and, when a hasty covetous glance of the would-be purchaser revealed a preference, the wily merchant refused all abatement of price. He was of coarser grain than Minami, who, when Beauregard left the country, presented him with a very good Kunisada, as a polite acknowledgment of his many purchases. But Ohara lent him for a few days an extremely rare series of pornographic designs by Utamaro, and reclaimed them on the morning of his departure.

One morning Ohara was unrolling a very spirited *makimono*, copied from Keion's "Flight of the Court," and giving a vivid representation of military pageant in the fourteenth century. As the original is, of course, not to be bought, we were on the point of arranging terms, when the hotel-boy entered and handed a telegram to Beauregard: "I have run

away. What shall I do? Reply Saito Hotel, Shiogama. Maru." His first impulse was to reply "Come at once," for the unexplained opposition had increased his desire to make a settlement, but, on second thoughts, the consideration for women, which I had already remarked as a kindly trait in his character, prompted this unkind response: "Go home; do not come to Tōkyō; will write." The letter took the sting from the telegram, for he explained how foolish it would be to leave home without her family's consent, as it might well happen in such a case that when he returned to France Maru's uncle might refuse to take her back. He repeated that, unless she could be spared (and of course he would recompense the hotel-keeper for loss of service), their proposed trip must be abandoned. So, the futile colloquy along the wires began again. Two days after: "All right at home. Am coming soon (*sono uchi*). Reply." But this time the student of Japanese was not to be put off with *sono uchi*. He replied: "Come by first train to-morrow, or not at all. Am leaving Tōkyō." As a matter of fact, he was going to Kose, while I was due at Ikao, and we should travel together as far as Karuizawa. Late the following evening, after spending the whole day in the theatre, he was handed a telegram by the hotel manager, who had not thought it his duty to send direct to the Kabuki-za, in which were these words: "I have missed the train. Box at station. Reply. Maru." Then the Frenchman lost his temper. He was quite incapable of playing the Oriental game of patience, and preferred to throw up the cards. This reply, brutal in its brevity, was flashed to poor Maru: "Too late. Do not come."

I had been at Ikao a fortnight, and absorbed by new acquaintances, was beginning to forget the very existence of O Maru San, when a long letter from Kose conveyed the surprising intelligence that she had at last joined Beauregard in that pretty little mountain village. Soon after arriving he had been caught in a violent storm on the slopes of Asama-yama, and had contracted severe rheumatism. Unable to walk much and feeling rather lonely, he wrote finally to Ishinomaki, stating that, if she cared to travel so far and become his companion for the remaining month and a half of his stay, he would make all ready for her reception. But, he added, her decision must be prompt and definite. A third and last letter reached him from the Asano-ya. "My niece," wrote the old man, "would like nothing better than to accept your kind proposal. But in the town of Ishinomaki an alliance between an honourable stranger and a humble Japanese girl is looked upon with disfavour. How is it in Kose?" A final telegram—"No difficulties here. If you come, what train?"—evoked the answer: "Start by eight o'clock train to-night." And to his great astonishment she kept her word. One afternoon he saw a horse, bearing two bundles tied to a high saddle, of the protective sort which is used for children in England when they ride donkeys, ascending the glen from Yunosawa. Rain had made the path impossible for rickshaws. One bundle was O Maru, the other her luggage. She had never been on a horse before, and had never taken such a long journey alone by train, but, after two days' travelling in the hottest part of August, there she was, smiling and looking very happy at the sight of Borega Sama. Little by little he discovered the reasons of so many delays and prevarications. The landlord,

who had at first advised her coming, had been dissuaded by some acquaintances of the Norwegian skipper, who urged that, if she waited for the latter's return, it would be more to her advantage, since he might take her for several voyages and make a longer contract with the family than the French tourist cared to entertain. Then she had "run away," but only to her aunt, who was an ex-geisha and gave dancing lessons at Shiogama. At last, as no more news was heard of the Scandinavian suitor, she received permission to follow her own inclination; and, though the journey had presented many terrors, she came, armed with an *o mamori* (amulet) of Watazumi-no-Mikoto, and, thanks to the care of that potent deity, attained the goal of her long-thwarted desire.

## III

Kose is an ideal lovers' nest, hidden in the heart of thick forests, where steep hills dip to a stream, now visible, now invisible, but always to be tracked by its trickling or tumbling song. Shady rambles and cool retreats invite whispering confidence, but, to gain a view of the rolling country, which culminates in volcanic peaks eight thousand feet high, hard climbing or riding is inevitable. O Maru was much too timid and delicate to accompany Beauregard on these tiring expeditions, and replied one day to a question as to how she liked Kose, "Taihen yoroshi : ke' domo miru koto arimasen." (It was very nice, but there was nothing to see there.) Then he discovered that what she most wanted to see, more even than the sights of Tōkyō or Kyōto, was the famous temple of Zenkōji at Nagano. It was believed by the members of the Buddhist sect to which her family belonged that the souls of the dead were first given rendezvous at Zenkōji, immediately after death, before departing on their long journey to other worlds. Her great wish, therefore, was to make offerings of rice and incense to Amida on the spot where her father and mother had passed away, that they might know how lovingly she cherished their memory. Two days later her wish

was accomplished. As they climbed the broad avenue, lined with little booths, at which were sold rosaries, candles, breviaries, incense, toys, and sweetmeats, Beauregard realised for the first time what vast influence is still wielded in Japan by the Buddhist faith. Hundreds of pilgrims, in curiously-patterned white dresses and palmer hats, moved with chatter and laughter towards the chief gateway. On the left of the entrance stands a nunnery, ruled by an abbess of high rank, and those who cross a graceful bridge to enter it find themselves between two large ponds of pink-flowered and white-flowered lotos, about the roots of which crawl sacred tortoises. Where the shops end an avenue of gods extends upto the main temple. Not only Monju and Shi Tenno and images of the chief *rakan* or disciples of Buddha alternate with lanterns of bronze or stone, but the six Jizō, elsewhere so humbly carved in common wood, sit proudly prominent in white marble. O Maru had bought a packet of rice, some sticks of incense, and a little rosary, whose beads were daintily strung on purple cord. Beauregard took off his shoes and followed her into the main temple. In that enormous building, two hundred feet in depth by one hundred in width, the huge outlines of gilded gods glimmered darkly, while rustling priests moved to and fro on mysterious errands. From the multitudinous rafters, whose number, 69,384, is said to correspond with the number of Chinese characters in the Buddhist scriptures, pigeons flew continually, and the flutter of their wings, together with the jingle of copper *rin* tossed lightly into the money-box, accompanied, without distracting, the low mutter of perpetual prayer. When O Maru approached one of the priests with her filial

offerings, the old man looked rather inquisitively at the handsome foreigner, but said nothing, and, signing a certificate of piety, on which her name and the death-names of her parents were inscribed, gave it to her together with a circular pink sweetmeat, on which was stamped a sacred wheel, typical of the law. Then, twining the mauve rosary about her chubby hands, she murmured three times "Namu Amida Butsu"—("I adore thee, O eternal Buddhä), and, as she left the altar-rails, threw five *rin* into the treasury. Her devotions were accomplished, and, much lightened in heart, she rejoined Beauregard, who was inspecting the precincts of the temple. Chief of the treasures is a sacred golden group, representing Amida and his two followers, Kwannon and Daiseishi, which is supposed to have been made by Shaka Muni himself from gold found in Mount Shumi, the centre of the universe. Legend relates that the foes of the true faith had done their worst to destroy this image: all attempts to abolish it by fire and water and the sword had failed: since the fourteenth century it has rested inviolate in a shrine, shrouded by a curtain of rich brocade. So carefully is it now guarded, that the pious are only allowed, on payment of a small fee, to behold the outermost of seven boxes in which it is enclosed. Far more accessible is Binzuru, a hideous brick-red deity, whose image stands outside the chancel, to which position he is expelled for having "remarked upon the beauty of a female" in violation of the vows of chastity incumbent on Buddha's disciples. Binzuru is amply avenged for this harsh expulsion. Wherever his ugly visage is seen, you will find him caressed and surrounded by women and girls, who firmly believe that they have only to touch his

body and then rub their own in the same part, to banish every pain, great or small, to which the human frame is subject.' As they wandered from one god to another, Beauregard questioned O Maru about her faith, which he found to be simple and firm. Once she had seen with O Kiku a picture of hell at a temple festival, in which fiery demons were inflicting such tortures on unbelievers that, though their own belief was orthodox, she and her friend had cried themselves to sleep. It occurred to the Frenchman to ask whether she had no fear of being punished for living with him as his wife, but she replied that she had never heard that that was sinful, unless she had been promised to some one else. He asked her what was the use of giving rice to the souls of the dead, and whether she thought they would eat it; but she explained that, whereas living people eat rice, the *hotoke*, or spirits, only eat the soul of the rice, which is there, although we cannot see it. She believed in prayer, fasting, and amulets, but thought it wasteful to spend more than five *rin* (about one halfpenny) a month on the gods, since they required no clothing and very little food.

From Nagano the pair travelled to Kyōto, where they remained until the end of their six weeks' honeymoon. There I saw a great deal of Beauregard, who was equally enamoured of Japanese art and his Japanese wife. His days would be spent in visits to those temples where good specimens of the Shijō and Kōrin schools were jealously kept, but as he had letters of introduction from an eminent professor and painter to the authorities, he had exceptional opportunities of pursuing his passionate study of the Kyōto Renaissance painters. All the treasures of Daitokuji

and Chionin, of Kinkakuji and Ginkakuji, were shown to him. Sometimes he would spend many hours among the early sculptures of Nara, or avail himself of an invitation to scan the private collection of a rich shipowner at Ōsaka. His contempt for Hokusai and Hiroshigi was unbounded; words could not express his dislike for what he called "the shallow, meretricious judgment of de Goncourt." I await with considerable interest the *brochure* which he intends to publish by means of the *Mercure de France* for the edification and confusion of French connoisseurs. But O Maru interested me more than Okyō's fish and Sōsen's monkeys. I would often spend the evening with them, and, as we conversed hotly in our barbarian tongues, she would sit contentedly sewing and humming to herself, delighted to make tea or furnish information about her fatherland. Her own curiosity was seldom excited, but now and then she betrayed depths of astounding ignorance. One night Beauregard had been reading me a chapter from Anatole France's delightful "Le Livre de mon Ami," in which that writer thus describes a characteristic reminiscence of childhood:

"J'étais bien payé de ma peine dès que j'entrais dans la chambre de ces dames; car il y avait là mille choses qui me plongeaient dans l'extase. Mais rien n'égalait les deux magots de porcelaine qui se tenaient assis sur la cheminée, de chaque côté de la pendule. D'eux-mêmes, ils hochaient la tête et tiraient la langue. J'appris qu'ils venaient de Chine et je me promis d'y aller. La difficulté était de m'y faire conduire par ma bonne. J'avais acquis la certitude que la Chine était derrière l'Arc-de-Triomphe, mais je ne trouvais jamais moyen de pousser jusque-là."

With unconscious appropriateness she suddenly asked, "Shina no kuni, Furansu no kuni, onaji koto des ka?" (Are France and China the same country?) Nothing could persuade her that thunder was not a phenomenon peculiar to Japan, for she had always associated it with the wrath of a Japanese deity. Any breach of etiquette shocked her sense of propriety, and she spent many unhappy moments because of René's remissness in two particulars. He always accepted hospitality when offered by a Japanese friend, instead of refusing at least twice for politeness' sake: he often forgot to beat down the price of something which took his fancy, depriving both seller and buyer of the joy of bargaining. These faults lowered him in the otherwise indulgent eyes of his little consort. Her delicacy in the matter of presents was very marked. Though her lover was anxious that she should buy a souvenir at every place they visited together, he could never induce her to choose any but an inexpensive trinket. To remedy this he occasionally relied on his own judgment, but the result was unfortunate. I remember that we returned from Ōsaka with the prettiest roll of *kimono* silk to be found in the bazaar, but when this was given to O Maru she rejected it, explaining that such bright colours could only be worn by a girl of fifteen or eighteen. Her own age was twenty-two. On another occasion he chose a sober stuff of silver-grey, but this, it appeared, was only suitable to a woman of forty. After that he gave up using his judgment, and begged her to spend what money she wanted in her own way.

Her own way was extravagant, as we discovered afterwards: it was only his money that she was chary

of spending. For, when he presented her with sixty *yen* on the eve of departure, to his surprise she clung to him and cried out excitedly, "Watakusi hachiju yen hoshii!" (I want eighty *yen!*) As she had never seemed mercenary, and had at first stipulated for fifty, he could not account for this eager demand, which was of course immediately accorded. But the next day O Maru appeared in a very beautiful cloak, lined with white satin, on which were hand-painted designs by a well-known painter of Kyōto. She had spent nearly the whole of her present, fifty-five *yen* (about £5 10*s*.), on that royal garment, which would certainly be the most handsome of its kind in Ishinomaki. Her parting presents to René were some prettily embroidered handkerchiefs of silk and an original poem, which had more "actuality" than literary merit. In fact, it was a very artless *cri de cœur*, and ran thus:

> "Sad is my love for
> Beaurega Sama:
> He goes, but I go
> Never, to France."

I accompanied them to Kōbe, where the *Belgic* was waiting to take passengers to San Francisco, and charged myself with the duty of sending O Maru home to her family. She came with us on the liner, and was overawed by the huge steamer, with its crowd of loud-voiced, whisky-drinking barbarians. Once she crept closer to René, and asked him if he would return as soon as his mother died. Filial affection, she knew, had the first claim. Then she gave him a small wooden wedge, on which was the name of her sea-god, Watazumi-no-Mikoto, with injunctions to press it to

his bosom every day at the hour of noon. At last the bell sounded to clear the decks. O Maru took off her wooden *geta* and climbed down into the tug. Up to that moment she had borne herself bravely, but when she saw the lessening figure of her lover recede for ever into the waste of waters, she sank down in a storm of passionate sobs at my feet.

## IV

SIX months later I was passing down the Rue Royale, when I saw René Beauregard at a little table outside Maxime's with two companions, who were engaged in a fierce dispute about the never-ending Affaire, while his whole attention was absorbed by a letter, which I knew from the texture of the paper to be Japanese. Greeting him with effusion—for we had not met since the *Belgic* sailed from Kōbe—I asked whether he had any news of O Maru since his return to Paris. For answer he handed me the letter, which, with some trouble, I deciphered. It was to the following effect:

"To Borega Sama, 120, Avenue de Clichy, Paris.

"From the time of your coming to Nippon to the time of your going back to your own country, as you have been so very kind to me, I humbly render thanks. To learn by your letter that you had safely crossed so many countries and great seas was indeed good news. I had fasted for twenty-three days and offered daily prayers to Watazumi-no-Mikoto that you might not fall into danger before reaching the house of your honourable mother. I am living with my aunt at Shiogama, and shall wait seven years in the hope that you will come back. I pray for you every

day, and shall never forget the happy times we spent together in Kose and Kyōto. However long I write, there is no end to it, so I shall look for a further occasion to tell you my love. In respectful obedience,

"O Maru."

The letter contained an enclosure, which it required the intervention of a Japanese friend to interpret. Whether the girl had herself written the six poems which follow, or, as it seems to me more probable, had adapted them with slight alterations from a popular song-book, I cannot say. They form both epilogue and moral to this typical tale.

1.

"Could I but meet you!
Could I but see you!
Waves roll between us;
Wishing is vain.

2.

"Thinking about you,
Watching your likeness;
Yet the watched likeness
Says not a word.

3.

"You, my French master,
Living in Paris,—
I am Awazu's
Single lone pine.

4.

'In mine ears waking,
In mine ears dreaming,
Ever one sound is,
That of thy voice.

5.

'Heard though the voice be,
Unseen thy body;
So, on the mountains,
Nightingales sing.

6.

'Now—though we once slept
Pillow by pillow—
'Where and how are you?'
Asking, I weep."

# AFTERNOON CALLS

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## I

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER, describing his travels in Russia, declares that, whereas Moscow and St. Petersburg fell short of the romantic dream-pictures which he had conceived of them by reason of their fame, the reverse was the case with Nijni-Novgorod, of which the name alone allured his ear with chiming syllables. Having reached the town with no other premonitory bias than the spell exercised by its magical appellation, he was ravished by the picturesque admixture of races from every corner of the empire. This paradoxical conflict between history and geography makes many victims. I too had been haunted by the prestige of a great name in Japanese annals—the name of Ashikaga. As I studied period after period of the turbulent evolution from feudal rivalry to military usurpation, from military usurpation to constitutional monarchy, it seemed more and more evident that the Ashikaga Shōguns, during two-and-a-half centuries of power, had been greater friends of art and learning than any rulers before or since. At Kyōto I had seen the golden pavilion of Yoshemitsu (whom Professor Fenollosa compares with Cosmo de Medici) adorned

with mural paintings and screens by the artists whom he had imbued with the spirit of dreamy seclusion of the Hangkow idyllists. Under his patronage Chinese learning took root in Ashikaga University; the religious plays, or *Nō*, acquired in the hands of Kiyotsugu their claims to rank as aristocratic opera; the war of chrysanthemums, between rival dynasties in Yamato and Kyōto, was composed by an astute compromise. In short, culture was not purchased at the cost of firm government. Nearly a century later came Yoshimasa, whose silver pavilion, where he held æsthetic revels with his favourites, the Abbots Soāmi and Shuko, was as pale a copy of his great predecessor's taste as his capacity to govern was inferior. Effeminacy followed in the train of refinement. The Ashikaga *régime* left a legacy of civil war and ruined peasantry for stronger rulers to replace by hardier methods, but it also bequeathed the memory of a new learning and a new art. To Ashikaga, then, urged by misleading memories and the promise I had given to visit Ikao comrades, I gladly repaired when September rains depressed the face of Tōkyō.

Yamada San, rightly thinking that living friends were of more interest than dead lions, took me straight from the station to his father's house, and postponed all sightseeing until the morrow. Here I first realised the patriarchal atmosphere of an old-fashioned home. Father and mother were gravely courteous, and took pains to show me polite attention, but the son scarcely spoke in their presence; and pretty O Mitsu, who looked extremely pale, became mute as ivory. The entry of two cousins, who spoke a little English, introduced some animation; and after the consumption of tea and oranges O Mitsu was

asked to sing me an old song, playful, if possible, because the foreigner would find it more easy to understand. Crouching over a long-stringed *koto*, she sang (the weather was very hot) this popular mosquito song:

> "All you wives, lying
> Outside the curtain,
> Many mosquitoes
> Often have stung,
> Till the Bell Seven
> Clanged from the temple:
> Such things a good wife
> Heeds not at all."

It was explained that a wife would be showing disrespect to her husband by taking rest under the mosquito-net in his absence. If, therefore, he happened to stop out all night, she must still wait for him, outside the net, until the bell for matins sounded the retreat of her winged persecutors. "The Bell Seven" is named in accordance with old reckoning: the time represented is really four in the morning, when the Japanese day begins. That was the last I saw of O Mitsu, for etiquette forbade her taking supper at my hotel in company with her husband and father-in-law.

We spent the evening with the Tanaka family. There, too, I observed the reticence imposed on women in their own homes. Tanaka Okusama, who at Ikao had discoursed so brightly on every possible subject from ethics to Epaminondas, crept quietly from one to another of her guests, offering tea and cakes, but never joining in the conversation. Her husband, who had a most genial, refined face, made an excellent host: the four boys sat silently in a corner. Many questions were put about European houses and habits,

for the Ashikaga of to-day, being a great centre of the trade in cotton goods made from foreign yarn, is accustomed to the sight of foreign commercial travellers.

The antiquities of the place were disappointing. The Academy of Chinese Learning, founded, if tradition may be believed, in 852, after attaining its zenith of prosperity under Yoshemitsu, has since gradually declined. The great library of Chinese works is broken up; only a few books remain. Of Confucian relics there rests only an impressive bronze tablet, with full-length figure of the sage, from which "rubbings" are sold to the pious. A sinister black impression of the gaunt, long-nailed philosopher, whose teaching still broods like a shadow over the majority of Japanese households, recalls to me, in the shape of a colossal *kakemono*, that dusty, dilapidated school, whose students are deserting it for Western lore. The vast temple, however, standing in a grove of cryptomeria, is still thronged by worshippers, and forms a worthy link with the historic glories of Ashikaga. In a side-chapel stand wooden effigies of all the Shōguns, wearing the tall black court-cap and the moustache with small pointed beard, fashionable from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries. It is related that three similar figures, preserved in the Tōjiin Temple at Kyōto, were subjected to the indignity of decapitation in 1863, when the Restoration party wished to insult the memory of the Shōgunate, but did not dare to outrage the still powerful Tokugawa. The heads were pilloried in the dry bed of the Kamogawa, where it was customary to expose the heads of criminals. But Kyōto was at once the scene of their rise and their decline. In Ashikaga itself their memory lives

as changeless and as free from insult as the tutelary mountain rampart of Akagisan.

There being no hotel near Yamada's dwelling, he secured me a room in a geisha-house, with the result that late revelry made sleep impossible. But a bathe next morning in the rushing Tonegawa, with the exciting diversion of shooting some rapids in a crazy punt, invigorated me and amused a crowd of urchins, who shouted from the bank, "We want to see the naked foreigner!" By the end of the second day I felt at home with the older generation of both families, and was shown over warehouse, mill, and granary. Having not omitted to present *miage* on arrival, I departed in a shower of good wishes and small souvenirs. Yamada senior, who had never before (so his son declared) been willing to make the acquaintance of a foreigner, insisted on my accepting a roll of *habutai* (white silk, resembling taffeta), while Tanaka Okusama met me at the station with a parting gift of pickles and poetry. She had made the one, her husband the other. In fact, he had added this *haikai* to his published works:

"You, like a bird, pass,
Joyous, untrammelled;
Sad our farewell, when
Kiri-trees fall."

II

THE holy province of Izumo should be visited in October. Then the Shintō gods and goddesses, deserting every other part of Japan, assemble at the great shrine of Kizuki under the presidency of Ōnamuji. But every year Ōnamuji must have sadder news to tell his dwindling fellow-deities. At one time his own temples on Mount Daisen were as many as two hundred and fifty; these have crumbled to a few mossy ruins. The goddess *Inada-hime*, whose lover intoxicated with *saké* the eight-headed serpent and cut the monster in pieces, that she might become his spouse, is invoked by fewer youths and maidens desiring happy marriages. On all hands the Shintō Pantheon is being undermined by two strangely allied foes—by atheism and Christianity. Though full of sympathy for the august descendants of Izanagi and Izanami, the creator and creatress of the Japanese universe, I could not refuse the hospitality of a Japanese Christian, whose unremitting kindness will always be associated for me with the romantic beauty of Matsuë.

From my hotel, which stood on the edge of the blue Shinjiko lagoon, I was watching the little steamers puff angrily to and fro, the endless procession of

passengers across the long curving bridge, and one or two old fishermen wading in the shallows, when a message arrived inviting me to take tea with Assistant-Judge Nomura at his house on Castle-hill. Happening to arrive before the other guests, I was first shown a curious collection of prints, illustrating the costumes and customs of ancient Korea, and a series of pictures of all the ironclads belonging to the Japanese navy. This mixture of old and new was very characteristic of Mr. Nomura, who admired with enthusiasm Western dress, furniture, and religion, but reverenced at the same time his own national traditions. Naturally his knowledge of the two was one-sided, and he was happily unconscious that his fine collection of Inari and Satsuma ware was simply insulted by the base intrusion of a sixpenny London saucer. Four inhabitants of Matsuë—two young lawyers, a musician, and an old painter—were announced, and the host at once took a more ceremonious tone. We all entered the tiny tea-room, nine feet square, containing four and a half mats, and were occupied for more than half an hour with *cha-no-yu*, the august tea-making, which seemed to me unnecessarily long, perhaps because it was conducted by a wizard in a grey coat and blue tie. I preferred the dainty witches of the Miyako-odori. Besides the formal ablution and handling of accessory instruments, at stated intervals a bell was rung, the room was swept, we walked from the house to the garden and back from the garden to the house with a scrupulosity that would have satisfied Hideyoshi himself. At last the august tea, thick and green and hot, was presented to each visitor, who drank with slow but noisy demonstrations of lip-homage, to testify polite satisfaction.

Then we adjourned to the sitting-room, where the musician brought out two antique Chinese objects, one bearing resemblance to a flute and the other to a violin with shaggy, semicircular bow. On these he produced, not without effort, very weird sounds, which I was obliged to eulogise as being entirely novel and remarkable, for I could not compare them with any melodies familiar to European ears. I believe the others shared my relief when a painting competition was suggested, for they could all handle a brush as easily as I a pen, and the eye is less fastidious than the ear. The first bout was in three colours, sepia, Indian black, and red, though the last was sparingly used. The designs were rapidly and lightly touched in—a hawk pouncing on a goose; a carp swimming against the stream; a frog climbing up a reed; and a terrified child, with shaven pate, running away from a temple-dancer, masked by a lion's head. Next a batch of fans was distributed to the competitors, who speedily adorned them with fanciful arabesques, in which curled clouds played hide-and-seek with Fuji, or moonlit pines peeped out from drifted snow. We drew lots for these souvenirs of playful skill, and to me fell the picture of the child flying from the lion-mask. But at this point Mr. Nomura's own children, two charming little girls, brought us in presents of flowers and cakes wrapped in silver paper. The rickshaws were at the door; *sayonara* rang cordially in our ears; one of the pleasantest calls I ever made came to an end.

Curiosity prompted me to attend the service held by native Christians in an abandoned Shintō temple perverted to evangelical use. Most of the congregation belonged to the more credulous sex. Mothers, carry-

ing their babies on their backs, sat in rows on mats, while one or two chairs were placed for foreign visitors. All joined heartily in the hymns and listened attentively to the simple prayers. Sometimes a *shōji*, or sliding shutter, was gently pushed aside, and an inquisitive face peered in on the worshippers. The missionary, a man of athletic frame, with the cold, fixed eyes of a fanatic, preached with fervour on the subject of original sin. He held the doctrine that perfection was to be realised on earth, and believed that he had personally attained it. From all accounts he was a hard-working idealist, who spared no pains to make converts, but his ascetic views must seem violently out of harmony with the Shintōist easy-going faith, which has for moral code the single maxim, "Follow your impulses and obey the Emperor." Although not subjected to persecution, a native Christian hardly ever remains in his birthplace. The Matsuë converts whom we met had come from Hiroshima, Ōsaka, and other spots. Some estimate of the progress of Western religion among Matsuë merchants may be based on the proportion of believers in the middle school, to which all the boys of the better classes are sent. Out of about five hundred boys and sixty masters, two boys and one master profess Christianity.

Etiquette is luckily assimilated to foreign custom among Japanese Christians. When Judge Nomura returned my call, he was accompanied by his wife and little girls, who were delighted with some dolls and picture-books which I had purchased for them in London. At first O Ai San and O Dai San, diminutive damsels aged four and five respectively, sat solemnly in a corner burning fireworks—*hana-bi*, as they are called—with tied tongues and eyes fixed on

the spluttering flowers of flame. But gradually they thawed, and losing all their shyness, played battledore and shuttlecock, blindman's buff, and other games. When the babies had gone home with their nurse, the judge and his wife remained to dinner, and a lay preacher, who spoke English perfectly, proved an invaluable medium of conversation. As my guests expressed a desire to conclude the evening with hymns, we sang a great many, from which they derived spiritual pleasure, while my knowledge of their language was much enlarged. The lay-preacher had always two or three hymn-books in his pocket, English and Japanese versions being printed on opposite pages. Suddenly this pious exercise was rudely interrupted. A tipsy geisha, holding a *saké*-cup in her hand, staggered into the room and addressed some bacchanalian words to the lay preacher, who chanced to be near the door. She had escaped from a rather noisy wedding-party, which was feasting and clapping hands in the room below, while the bridal couple had retired and the *shimadai*, an emblematic group of pine and bamboo, crane and tortoise, remained for a symbolic centre of festal joy. We took this intrusion for a hint to separate, and it certainly jarred on a devotional mood. To my friends this apparition must have suggested the "scarlet woman," whose cup is full of abominations, but I could not regard it in any other light than the opportune assertion of *la joie de vivre*, protesting against the gloomy gospel of Puritan restraint.

## III

AND yet the joy of living, dissociated from any principle but that of self-indulgence, is apt to produce strange types of Anglo-Saxon degeneracy. Dr. Silenus, whose hospitality and frankness are a byword in Azabu, would seem to have fallen victim to that fatal fascination which Mr. Kipling ascribes to the lands "East of Suez, where the best is like the worst; Where there ain't no ten commandments, an' a man can raise a thirst." Thirst was never absent, and the decalogue rigidly banished from the epicurean establishment, which I take leave to describe as a warning and a comfort to the "unco' guid."

Sunday afternoon was regularly set apart for pagan revels, to which the whole neighbourhood was admitted, for the large-hearted Doctor loved to see his house full of friends and acquaintances. When you had skirted the moat which encircles the imperial palace, and climbed the steep *daimachi*, you hailed with relief a row of houses, mostly inhabited by Europeans and surrounded by similar high fencing. But, the gate once passed, all similarity between Liberty Hall and its respectable neighbours ceased. In no other courtyard would you be greeted by the sight of a hawk, an owl, a goat, and several monkeys dwelling together in unity,

Lucullus, the goat, was an epicurean like his master, but less eclectic, for his diet included wood and iron and stones, nails and lighted cigars and boxes of matches. Indeed, he might still be living, a triumph of desire over digestion, had he not one day tried a dose of refined camphor, which brought death and a costly Shintō funeral.

Having penetrated the bodyguard of animals, you would enter a large room, adorned with fine bronzes and screens, which you had not leisure to examine, for so many unusual sights claimed attention. At the back would be masked dancers or musicians, rather cramped for space by reason of the motley, semicircular crowd of men, women, and children, who filled the foreground as far as a row of chairs set in the verandah for barbarian friends. Dominating all sat the master of the revels, his huge torso bare to the waist and profusely tattooed with elegant designs. As he passed the whisky to the "parasites" (for so he was accustomed to call the band of adherents who made his house their own), the genial, rotund Doctor looked the very incarnation of Ebisu or Silenus.

The first dancer on the afternoon of my arrival was Kabukei-jishi, the boy in a lion's mask, whose figure is so familiar in Japanese streets on New Year's Day. Kabukei, a native of Echigo, is said to have originated and given his name to this realistic dance. Though the children must have seen it often before, some of them laughed and others cried with terror, as the clever mimic crawled up to them roaring, or scratching himself, or shaking his ears. Then followed a comic scene between two peasants and a Daimyō, who was obliged to defend himself with sword and fan against the heavy hoes of his disrespectful henchmen. A



Lion-Dance on New Year's Day

medical comedy, probably inspired to some extent by Dr. Silenus, had for *motif* a quarrel between a physician and a farmer, whose wife was expecting to give birth to a child but had no wish to complicate an old-fashioned process by new-fangled medicine. The outspoken dialogue did not shock the unsophisticated audience, for whom Nature is not swathed in conventional veils of reticence, but the actors observed the *ne coram publico* maxim to this extent, that the birth took place in the wings, to be followed by a rather thrilling infanticide. Bloodshed is always pleasing to the playgoers of Tōkyō. The last piece to be performed was a duologue between Kitsune, the fox-god, and a greedy rustic. Kitsune carried a bag of rice, and offered a mouthful in reward for every athletic or acrobatic feat which the other should succeed in imitating. When the gilt-snouted fox had set the example of leaping or balancing with adroit agility, the sly lout would make a clumsy pretence of doing the same, and always managed to obtain the rice by chicanery. At last the god discovered that he was being tricked, and killed the peasant with a blow from his rake. Nothing seemed to amuse the Azabu children so much as the antics of these two.

On another occasion Dr. Silenus invited a large party to witness a still more interesting exhibition in his garden. If I have used the word "degeneracy" to express his repudiation of certain moral ideas to which the Anglo-Saxon race pays the compliment of formal adherence, it should yet be added that his "self-indulgence" included the laborious pleasure of teaching himself the art of sword-making. Under Japanese tuition he had attained great proficiency, and if his blades did not rank with those of Masamune and

Muramasa, at least they excited the admiration and envy of experts. Between him, therefore, and those martial patriots of his adopted country who in their hearts regret the swashbuckling days of old, before barristers and deputies were minted from a foreign model, latent sympathy could not but exist. Now the *sōshi*, to whom allusion has already been made, and whose nominal profession might range from that of vagabond actor to that of political agent or bravo, have this in common—they love a life of roving independence, while owning loose allegiance to some momentary chief. As constitutional methods take deeper root among their compatriots, it becomes more difficult for them to practise an avowed calling which shall serve as a centre of organisation. In the summer of 1898 one of them hit on the brilliant idea of founding an Association for the Revival of the Noble Art of Self-defence; that is, the euphemism was closely akin to the title by which lovers of boxing in England and America glorify their taste, while the object was to promote skill in the use of lethal weapons. The Doctor, whom I regard as a thorough *rōnin*, or unattached "wave-man," refusing to bow the knee to social or ethical Baals, became at once a subscribing member. He used to declare that this adhesion procured him privileged places at almost every public function which he attended, so potent is the freemasonry of his brothers-in-arms. At least I can certify that it procured for us a spectacle of unique and amazing skill.

The first combat was between a swordsman and a spearsman, in which I fully expected that the lighter arm must easily prevail over the cumbrous and more lengthy one. But I had reckoned without the swivel,

which made the lance in dexterous keeping a formidable instrument. When the swordsman, abandoning the defensive, tried to strike down his opponent's spear and deal a close thrust, the latter with the rapidity of lightning drew in his weapon, and shooting it out again before the other could recover his ground, drove the point home. In four bouts out of five the spear proved mightier than the sword. Then it was pitted against a more archaic compound of pickaxe and boomerang. To a small-headed axe was attached an iron ball by a long cord, with which the holder tried to entangle his adversary's lance. He slung the ball with his right, and if successful drew a dagger with his left hand to plant the conquering blow. That many of the fencers could use either hand with equal effect was proved by the next series of encounters between two-sworded and one-sworded men. These had been very carefully matched, and the superior skill of the man who was armed with but a single sword in three cases out of seven decided the result. Like a wise *entrepreneur*, the Chief of the Sōshi had reserved his most sensational contest for the end. Female warriors are no novelty in Japan. The Emperor, even up to the time of his restoration to actual sovereignty in 1868, counted among his troops a corps of Amazons, whose training was as severe and whose prowess as remarkable as those of the *Samurai* themselves. When a stalwart woman came forward armed with a halberd and wearing the same wide *hakama* as her opponent, whose arm was a sword, she astonished us all by the vigour and dexterity of her onslaught. The war-cries which she uttered were very terrifying, and I am inclined to attribute her victory rather to them than to any hypocritical chivalry

on the part of her adversary. I wondered if this muscular virago obeyed the Confucian ordinance, "A woman should look on her husband as if he were heaven itself, and never weary of thinking how she may yield to her husband, and thus escape celestial castigation."

## IV

I WAS seated in the office of that flourishing Tōkyō newspaper, *Yorodsu Chōhō*—waiting for my friend the sub-editor, whose name, Kishimoto Bunkyo, will one day be famous, when my tedium was enlivened by an apparition. In spite of the care taken to entertain foreigners in the waiting-room of that popular journal, I had been bored. The square of Brussels carpet, the presence of table and chairs, the permission to keep one's shoes on, the literary delights afforded by Macaulay's "Essays," Washington Irving's "Sketch-book," and Mr. Stead's "If Christ came to Chicago"—all these things failed to dispel that *ennui*, born of perpetual waiting, which only Oriental patience can endure. Suddenly entered this welcome apparition, feminine, furious. "Is there any one here who speaks English?" it asked impetuously. The old door-keeper, catching at the sound "English," muttered the word "Kishimoto," and climbed the stairs in quest of my friend. The apparition and myself were thus left alone, and eyed each other furtively, with embarrassment. At any other time I should have been delighted to make the acquaintance of this pretty, smart American, but an instinct warned me that her business was private and delicate. I pretended to

be absorbed by the dreary violence of Mr. Stead. Kishimoto descended, alert and smiling. The apparition, thrusting a lady's visiting-card before his eyes, did not smile, but said rapidly:

"That's who I am. About that paragraph in yesterday's paper; who wrote it?"

"It was our reporter, madam. He is not at the office to-day, but if you wish to make an appointment——"

"Can he speak English?"

"No, madam, but I shall be pleased to put my services at your disposal, if I can be of any use. Personally my responsibility is limited to the English column, whereas——"

"I know, I know. Well, just tell your reporter that my husband's real mad about this, and he don't intend to let it drop. Likely as not, he'll be round here with a horse-whip, if your editor don't make some kind of apology or explanation. Good-day to you."

The apparition disappeared as suddenly as it had arrived. I looked reproachfully at Kishimoto. "Personal paragraphs?" I asked. "Are you trying to attack Americans with their own weapons? And why don't you leave ladies alone?" He explained that Mrs. Kurumaya, the pride of Idaho, was married to a Japanese professor, and had recently come to Tōkyō with her husband. As there happened to be a German from Idaho in the same hotel, the materials of a *ménage à trois* were too tempting to be neglected by a sharp penny-a-liner. Hence the paragraph, the scandal, and the apparition. "And what next?" I asked. "The editor will censure his informant, insert an apology, and banish the matter from his readers' memories by fresh paragraphs of a similar character."

Ten minutes after we had forgotten Mrs. Kurumaya and her grievances, for Kishimoto had invited me to visit his quarter of Hongō, and on the way thither we engaged in a vain effort to find the grave of the painter Hokusai. Yet the indications given by Professor Revon in his careful monograph seemed exact. We discovered the little monastery of Sekioji (divine promises) near Asakusa, and, having traversed the short avenue of cherry-trees which leads to the temple door, began our search among the black, lichen-stained tombs. In the third row we should have found a stone bearing on one side the words—

"Hokusai, of Shimōsa Province,
Famous Genius, Sincere Man,
Died May 10, 1849."

and on the other a poem, which the old man of eighty composed on his death-bed, one summer evening half a century before—

"Lightly a man's soul,
Lightly a fire-fly,
Passes in summer
Over the plains."

But though a young priest came to our assistance, the neglected row of undecipherable inscriptions guarded their secret, and we were obliged to give up the search.

Kishimoto could not understand the foreigner's admiration for Hokusai, and regarded it with the same tolerant contempt as most Germans exhibited thirty years ago towards admirers of Wagner. "There is nothing noble," he cried, "in his pictures, nothing sublime. He simply reproduced the vulgar street

scenes in which he lived. Even his drawings of Fuji, the holy mountain, are defiled by grinning carpenters and ostlers." He promised to show me specimens of what his countrymen considered far higher art when we should reach his father's house, and in effect, when we were seated in a pretty tea-room, overlooking a large garden, he unrolled for me some fine *kakemono* by Sesshu, Yeitoku, and Kiyonaga, which his family cherished with intense veneration. But nothing could arouse in me the enthusiasm which he evidently felt for three or four pieces of Chinese calligraphy. There was, of course, no colour in such masterpieces, no historic or anecdotic interest, for he assured me that the words themselves had no particular depth or beauty. Their sole charm consisted in the divine sureness of touch, which had traced the intricate flying characters through a maze of stroke and curve, and it seemed to my untrained intelligence that to appreciate them properly one must be a brush rather than a man.

From *kakemono* we turned to masks, of which he had a splendid collection. Students of Japanese demonology could have told me many weird stories of the cruel, leering monsters, whose faces reflected so vividly the devilish imagination of their makers. But Kishimoto only knew one story, and that rather a pretty one, concerning Kijin, whose rank in the diabolic hierarchy I have not been able to ascertain. He had it from a Buddhist nun, his aunt, and it bears every mark of having been invented *pour les jeunes filles*.

## THE STORY OF KIJIN AND O KAMMA SAN.

"When her mother died O Kamma was so overcome with grief that she lost for a time all interest

in living. Every day she laid flowers on the grave and every night she cried herself to sleep. But, when a month had passed, her father, who was of a gay disposition, loving music and *saké*, scolded the girl severely, saying, that since it was the will of Heaven that his *sezénnin*, or faithful housewife, had left the world of tears, it was undutiful to make the survivors miserable by perpetual Ah-ing, and impious as well. So O Kamma kept a bright face while she went about her household duties, and contrived every evening to slip up the hill to the temple of Kiyomizu-dera, where she prayed to the Most Compassionate One, the goddess Kwannon, whose countenance was gentle as her mother's had been. But when this habit had brought her into a peace of mind which was not remote from happiness, her father took a wife from among the geisha of Shimabara, whose jealousy and cruelty soon made her stepdaughter's life unbearable. She discovered that the girl's chief pleasure was her nightly visit to Kiyomizu, and, as she did not dare to forbid her openly to go to the temple, she would set her long tasks, saying, "You must not leave the house until you have mended all the *shōji*," or "First finish embroidering this *kimono*." But O Kamma worked twice as hard as before, and never once missed her evening prayer to the goddess. Then the wicked stepmother tried to frighten her out of going. One night she hid herself behind a pillar of the temple, and when the girl entered darted upon her wearing the fearful mask of Kijin, whose teeth glittered fiercely in the twilight. But O Kamma said, 'Bite me if you will, O Kijin Sama; I shall still say my prayers.' And then the tables were turned. For a scream of terror came from the geisha's lips, and when Kamma rose

from her knees she saw that the devil's mask was so tightly fixed that it could not be removed from her stepmother's features. The latter, in an agony of fright, cried out to the girl to pray for the help of the Most Compassionate One. So Kamma interceded with Kwannon, and the demon let go of the wicked woman's face; but from that time she lost all beauty and lightness of heart, nor did she interfere any more with the filial piety of O Kamma San."

Having shown me his private treasures, Kishimoto very kindly proposed taking me to some exhibitions, which would at least be strange, if not beautiful. We drove first to the Chrysanthemum Show at Dango-zaka, where my friend pointed out to me more kinds of blossom than I can remember; but some, by reason of their fanciful names, it would be impossible to forget. There were "White Dragon" and "Sleepy Head," a heavy disc with towzled petals; "Fisher's Lantern," of which the dark lustre showed like velvet beside the blushing pink-and-white complexion of "Robe of Feathers"; "Starlit Night," resembling frost-flowers; and, most marvellous of all, a galaxy of various sorts and colours, radiating by the grafter's patient skill from a single stem. Fearful of outraging his refined taste by such vulgar curiosity, I persuaded the sub-editor to wait for me in the tea-house which faces the river, while I followed some gaping women and children into twopenny shows which delight and instruct the simple. There, trained over trellis-work or encasing figures of wood and wax, the docile chrysanthemum evokes familiar scenes from legend or play. Chrysanthemum warriors pursue chrysanthemum maidens; chrysanthemum Danjuro dances the cryptic measure of Jiraiya before a chrysanthemum frog; chrysanthemum ele-

phants, castles, warships, monkeys, and demons compose a fantastic universe in which the flowers seem turned to magic serpents, which simulate and strangle all other creatures.

"What do you think of them?" asked Kishimoto, when I rejoined him. "Have you ever seen such monstrosities before?" "No," I answered; "they suggest to me a collaboration between Madame Tussaud and the author of the 'Arabian Nights.'" "Well," he said, "since you mention the 'Arabian Nights,' how would you like to hear one of our professional story-tellers? Shall we dine at Asakusa and go to a *yosé* afterwards?" "You anticipate my heart's desire, and lay up for yourself undying gratitude. Let us go to a *yosé*."

At the Isemon Restaurant delicious shrimp-cutlets and delightful geisha made of dinner a rather protracted ceremony. When we arrived at Tsurusé, near the Nihon-Bashi, only a few seats at the back of the room were unoccupied. We had paid 30 *sen* (about sevenpence-halfpenny) at the door, and the *nakauri*, a daintily-dressed waiting-maid, charged only twopence for tea, cushion, and tobacco-box. On the curtained platform at the opposite end of the hall a *zenza*, or *débutant*, was relating a comic anecdote, which greatly amused his auditors. Like so much Tōkyō humour, the laughter was calculated to flatter the townsman's shrewdness at the countryman's expense. A farmer, whose son had gone to make a living in the capital, received a telegram asking for a pair of new shoes, stout and solid, such as only the provinces can produce. Proud of his telegram, the first which had been received in those parts, and believing the mischievous information of a neighbour

who saw his way to an excellent joke, the father had the shoes made and hung them on the telegraph-wires, never doubting that they would at once be transported to Tōkyō. Soon after the crafty neighbour took down the shoes and substituted an old pair of his own. When the farmer happened to pass by in the evening, he was astounded by the excellence and promptness of telegraphic communication. "Look, my friends," said he; "in half a day I can send my son a pair of new shoes and receive his old ones in return."

The *zenza* was followed by a *tezuma*, or conjurer, whose tricks, though exceedingly deft and graceful, were such as I had seen before. Then came a mimic, whose impersonations of popular actors provoked much applause. At last, after a musical performance which served as interlude, the famous *raconteur*, Sukeroku, continued his elaborate historical romance, dealing with a Japanese Perkin Warbeck, whose pretensions to the Shōgunate had caused much dissension among the adherents of the Tokugawa dynasty. Evidently the frequenters of the *yosé*, like the bulk of playgoers, prefer mediæval to modern topics. As the venerable author tapped with his fan on a little wooden slab to emphasise his points, and passed with rich elocution from incident to incident, the audience followed with rapt attention. Abruptly, as it seemed, he arrested his narrative, and the formula "To be continued in our next" was legible in the half-expectant, half-disappointed looks of his hearers. Before leaving I gathered a few particulars about the profession of a *hanashika* or story-teller. An established artist, or *shinuchi*, will receive 100 *yen* (about £10) a month (during half of which period one tale will con-



A Professional Story-teller

tinue from night to night), or perhaps 60 per cent. of the takings. He may receive this sum from three or four *yosé*, since the *hanashika* form a corporation and have branch-houses in all the chief towns. Many of the more famous, like Hakuen and Encho, publish their stories after they have been delivered orally. I was not able to hear the English story-teller, Mr. Black, whose knowledge of Western literature and Japanese speech enables him to draw on a larger *répertoire* than his colleagues. Foreigners who desire to accustom their ears to the sound of the language will find the *yosé* infinitely more useful than the theatre, for the style is less literary and the diction less artificial.

## V

I WAS dazzled by Jiraiya. He bewildered my senses with sleight of hand and foot; he soothed my conscience with bold sophistries. For two *rin* I would have caught up an uncouth pike, assumed outrageous armour, and followed that robber-chief unhesitatingly to glory or to death. Vaguely I could remember being stirred in boyhood by the prowess of Robin Hood, by the fortunes of Aladdin, but here was a magnificent being who rivalled and surpassed both heroes in his own person. Like the outlaw of Sherwood Forest, he defied the powerful and helped the humble; judges and soldiers trembled at his name, which was breathed with blessings by the poor but grateful receivers of stolen goods. When the Government at last put forth its strength to crush him (and here his superiority was incontestable), instead of calling on his men in green to empty their trusty quivers, he had merely to summon his attendant sprite, a green frog, which could be trusted to spout fire until the last representative of futile authority should be utterly consumed. I had seen him dancing on the back of an awful dragon, which the frog vanquished before the beast had time to swing its tail; I had seen him dancing defiantly on a mountain

covered with snow, while his whirling spear threatened a score of enemies dancing round the base: suddenly the mountain changed to a fire-spitting frog, and the enemies danced no more. Perhaps it was this decorative fashion of dancing in battle which reconciled me to the wholesale slaughter of so many brave men. At the moment I merely felt that they were hostile to Jiraiya and well deserved their doom. Similarly, it seemed no more than the deserts of my loyal enthusiasm when a courteous attendant, bowing to the ground, brought a message to my box to the effect that Jiraiya would be pleased to see me in his dressing-room when the curtain fell.

I followed the attendant down winding passages, and was shown into a small wooden compartment, which contained grease-paint, brushes, dresses, and in the corner a dignified old man, with eyes as sharp as Ibsen's and the gravity of an archbishop. In his expression was no hint of robbery, dancing, or witchcraft. I looked round for the green frog, but the only other occupants of the room were two young ladies in sky-blue *kimono*, whom I afterwards discovered to be the actor's daughters. They never miss one of their father's performances. Presenting the letter which Mr. Fukuchi had kindly indited, I begged permission to interview Jiraiya at length on several phases of his complex personality. Ichikawa Danjuro (how well the stately syllables suited his demeanour) replied that he would be pleased to receive me any afternoon in the following week at his own house, where he would be resting between two engagements. But I knew that a magician (and, above all, a Japanese magician) held time to be of no more consequence than life or death, so I specifically demanded Wednesday as my share of his

timeless immortality. The request was granted: the applicant retired.

I have known actors so devoted to their art that they treat every incident, however trivial, as a matter of theatrical importance, and impose on every acquaintance the *rôle* of a spectator. They grasp your hand with that fervour which warms the heart of the gallery, and take leave of a lady with glances such as melt the stalls. This exaggerated consciousness of his calling is utterly absent from Mr. Danjuro, who, off the boards, becomes less of an actor and more of an archbishop in proportion as he realises every year the growing prestige and veneration attached by the bulk of his compatriots to the chief of the Japanese stage. To them he is a great deal more than the successful acquirer of fame and money: he is the inheritor and transmitter of a great tradition, a living link with that pictorial old Japan which, beaten back by modern innovation outside the theatre, holds its own gallantly in the unstormed fortress of national drama. His habitation is in complete accord with the honourable position held by its proprietor. Good taste and simplicity conceal all traces of the wealth which is his. Opposite the reception-room is a small lake, decorated with trees and huge ornamental stones such as the Japanese æsthete loves, since they recall, as far as may be, the freaks which Nature loves to play with forest and mountain. The rooms are of white wood, beautifully planed, and the only objects which suggest the theatre are *fuda*, or long laths, hung with wreaths and bands of silk, on which are inscribed tributes of admiration from tea-houses, geisha-houses, and guilds of various kinds. When the master entered, wearing a quiet-coloured *kimono* of grey cotton, he greeted his visitors

(my friend Kishimoto had volunteered his services as interpreter) with grave cordiality, and, having ordered a servant to bring in coffee and cakes, proceeded to answer my questions with imperturbable kindness.

"My family," he said, "have been actors for nine generations. My earliest recollection of the stage dates from 1840, when I was carried on in my father's arms, an infant of three, for introduction to the public. As you may know, the fashion of adoption plays a considerable part in all our confraternities. Great names are never allowed to die out. Thus, at the age of eighteen, I took the name of Gonjuro, being adopted by the manager of the old Tōkyō theatre, and it was not until my father's death in 1874 that I became Danjuro the Seventh, so styled. Danjuro the First made his *début* in the year 1673."

"And which is your favourite part, Mr. Danjuro?"

"I prefer historical plays, which revive old ideals and present noble figures for the emulation of posterity. In my opinion the best plays are those which stimulate patriotism. Perhap 'Kajincho,' in which Benkei, disguised as a priest, enables Yoshitsune to cross the bridge and become master of Kyōto, is the *rôle* I like best."

I had long since made the acquaintance of Benkei, the Devil Youth, and the feats both of mind and body which he achieved for the sake of his youthful victor, ever since the latter had defeated him in single combat on Gojō bridge, were familiar to me both from coloured prints and the representation of "Funa Benkei," by members of a *Nō* troupe. It was evident that the star actor had a weakness for "sympathetic" parts, and no doubt his mien and manner were admirably adapted to the impersonation of majestic priests.

"Have many of your actors the intellectual power to conceive and render historical heroes?"

"No; I fear it must be admitted that the great fault of too many actors is illiteracy. But in my young days we were scarcely to blame for this. The Government actually forbade us to receive any other than a theatrical education, which, as then understood, sufficiently taxed our time and strength. We were obliged to learn and reproduce exactly the traditional tones, gestures, and actions associated with any particular part."

"What is your opinion of foreign methods of acting?"

"I have only seen a few amateurs at the Legations, and cannot form an opinion. But when Mr. Fukuchi and Mr. Osada wrote a little piece in one act, half in French and half in Japanese, in which I had the honour of appearing with Madame Théo, I found it most difficult to sustain my part, since the lady's words and by-play were alike mysterious." A grim smile accompanied this souvenir of that comedietta, "The Green-eyed Monster."

"I suppose you have improved in many ways on the old-fashioned style of acting?"

This widely cast question invited such a shoal of answers that the conscientious examinee paused to consider.

"I will try to mention a few of the changes which I have done my best to bring about. The first thing I aimed at was greater freedom of interpretation. Tradition weighed like a millstone on the actor's neck. Instead of painfully and slavishly copying a predecessor, I set the example, as soon as I felt influential enough, of forming and putting into action my own conception of a character. But it was a hard task. Then I tried

to introduce more natural diction. Ranting and hollow declamation were the rule. Even now one is compelled to pitch the voice very high on account of the music, which some actors find an aid to delivery."

"But isn't that most fatiguing for the voice?"

"Not in well-built theatres, like the Kabukiza, where the vaulted roof leaves nothing acoustically to be desired."

"And your famous facial expression?"

"Ah! that, I think, was a real reform. The old actors' faces were barred with red and blue stripes to make them look ferocious, and, though they may have terrified the audience, they could not impress it in any other way, for variety of expression was impossible. Now, without discarding paint altogether, we aim at conveying all the emotions by play of feature, leaving sometimes to the musicians the task of rendering them into words."

In this respect I was able to confirm the actor's words by personal observation. Nothing had struck me as more peculiarly characteristic of a Japanese audience than its delight in histrionic grimace. The loudest applause, the frenetic shouts of "Hi-ya! Hi-ya!" had been evoked in my hearing, not by repartee or tirade, but always by convulsive contortions of visage in moments of supreme misery or rage. The word *grimace* connotes, I am afraid, that contempt, allied with coarseness of sensibility, which the stoical Anglo-Saxon is apt to entertain towards more gesticular and sensitive races. But some of Sara Bernhardt's death-scenes would be appreciated at their full value by the acute, minute observers of Tōkyō, just as all Paris was thrilled and captivated by Sada Yacco's realistic dying.

"Is the social status of the actor higher than it used to be, Mr. Danjuro?"

"I think it is. Speaking for myself, many of our nobles and one of our princes have done me the honour of inviting me to their houses, but such invitations are by no means common. The illiteracy of actors, to which I alluded just now, is a barrier to their social advancement."

"If I may broach a delicate question, will you tell me if the paragraphs circulated in the Japanese Press are correct? They state that your season of four weeks last April in Ōsaka brought you in a sum of 50,000 *yen* (nearly £5000), and that out of this amount you gave away in presents something like 20,000 *yen* (£2000)."

The old man smiled, less grimly. "It is quite true," he said. "But the presents are imposed by etiquette, and such customs are more or less reciprocal. The total receipts of the theatre, as certified by the Government auditor, after the tax had been deducted, amounted to 130,000 *yen* (£13,000)."

"How is it you have avoided the master-passion of our London actors to become an actor-manager?"

"I think a manager must be sorely tempted to put money first and art second. I often advise authors to make certain alterations in the plays for which I am engaged, but the responsibility of entire management would distract me from the purely artistic aspect of representation."

A mischievous recollection of Delobelle's, "Je n'ai pas le droit de renoncer à mon art" occurred to me, and I cynically wondered whether management might not diminish (it could hardly increase) the lion's share of the receipts.

"Will you ask Mr. Danjuro," I said, "if he will

like to put any questions to me about European actors and acting? I shall be most delighted to give him information on the subject."

The answer was a blank negative. For the patriotic actor no stage existed but his own. He had never been abroad; his interest in foreign things was limited to the flattering curiosity of foreign admirers.

The interview had already lasted an hour, for the translation of question and answer from concise English into more elaborate Japanese, and *vice versâ*, was a rather slow process. I therefore begged the invaluable Kishimoto to say that I could not think of trespassing any longer on Mr. Danjuro's leisure, and would spare him one or two other interrogations which had suggested themselves. Thanking him in my best Japanese, I was rising to go, but our unwearied host would not hear of it, and insisted on my continuing to the bitter end.

"Well, since you are so kind, I should much like to hear your opinion of the *sōshi shibai.*"

Knowing that the *sōshi*-theatre must appear to a conservative actor as red a rag as the Independent Theatre to Mr. Clement Scott or the Théâtre de l'Œuvre to the late M. Sarcey, I awaited the reply with interest. But the gallant attempt to destroy feudal spectacular drama with ammunition drawn from French and English arsenals had failed so miserably, that the patriot could afford to be generous. His eyes twinkled as he answered: "Certainly some of the *sōshi* had great talent, but it was all of the theoretic kind. They had splendid theories about reforming the stage and bringing it into harmony with progress, with the spirit of the age, and other fine things. But, when they had to translate their theories into practice, the result fell very far short of their

aims. Their writers were amateurs, their actors were amateurs; they knew nothing of stage-craft. The public, excited by the promises, were willing enough to give them a trial, but, as they did not know how to interest the public——"

"Then you gave them no assistance, Mr. Danjuro?"

"None at all."

"Are you blessed with a censor of plays?"

"There is a censorship, but it falls under the head of ordinary police duties, and is not specially limited to the theatre. Political and licentious passages are carefully excised before performance, and I doubt if the authority of the censor has been exercised in the Meiji era (since the Restoration)."

"How is it that foreign plays fail to interest your playgoers?"

It is my honest belief that Kishimoto, from a mistaken idea of sparing my feelings, abridged considerably the answer to this question. Both he and Mr. Danjuro chuckled a great deal, and seemed to be exchanging sympathetic affirmations. Then came the crushing rejoinder: "Because in all your plays the attitude of men to women seems to us not only irrational but ridiculous."

I changed the subject. "Which classes go most to the theatre?"

"The middle and lower classes. Since the Emperor witnessed a performance in Count Inonyé's house in 1886 it has become more fashionable for men of rank to go occasionally, but it cannot be said that the aristocracy, as a class, patronise the stage."

"Can Mr. Danjuro tell me if the *mawari-butai*, or revolving stage, resembling what the Greeks used to call *eccyclema*, is native or imported? Some Japanese

have told me that it was probably adopted from a foreign source." Mr. Danjuro held the opposite opinion.

"And how far is your stage controlled by guilds?"

"The old system has entirely broken down. Formerly some six or seven families had complete control of the theatre. A novice could only enter the profession through adoption by one or other of these. He received an elaborate education; he adopted the name and a modified form of the crest of his patron. The right to play certain parts was vested in certain actors, who transmitted the privilege. But now all that is changed. Any one can go on the stage and play any part he likes. There is no restriction and no training either."

"And is the special tax on actors now abolished, giving place to an income-tax?"

"No; that is an error. We still pay a heavy tax, irrespective of income."

"One more question. Have you any association corresponding to that which in England is known by the name of the Actors' Benevolent Fund?"

"Yes; we have a large guild, which undertakes to help members overtaken by misfortune and to expel others whose actions bring discredit on the stage. For we love our art, and are rewarded by its growing popularity with all classes of the community."

On this patriotic note I thought it well to close. I urged Kishimoto to exhaust his stock of honorifics in a suitable vote of thanks, and, as I took leave of the patient, archiepiscopal veteran, I wondered how a mosquito feels when it has been stinging with impertinent curiosity, hour after hour, some grave, immemorial image of Buddha.

# THE SCARLET LADY

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## I

—"La dame en noir des carrefours
Qu'attendre après de si longs jours?

*   *   *   *

—Je suis la mordeuse, entre mes bras,
  De toute force exaspérée
Vers les toujours mêmes hélas;
  Ou dévorante—ou dévorée.

Mes dents, comme des pierres d'or,
  Mettent en moi leur étincelle:
Je suis belle comme la mort
  Et suis publique aussi comme elle.

Aux douloureux traceurs d'éclairs
  Et de désirs sur mes murailles,
J'offre le catafalque de mes chairs
  Et les cierges des funérailles.

Je leur donne tout mon remords
  Pour les soûler au seuil du porche
Et le blasphème de mon corps
  Brandi vers Dieu comme une torche.

*   *   *   *

—La dame en noir des carrefours
Qu'attendre après de si longs jours
      Qu'attendre?

—J'attends cet homme au couteau rouge."

Émile Verhaeren.

IN Europe she wears black. That colour is better suited to the ignoble tragedy of which she is both heroine and victim. At night you may see her hovering furtively about the edge of a square, where shadows hang darkest, or plucking at passers-by with words of vulgar endearment. All she has to offer is momentary pasture for the teeth of desire, since love and confidence, the lanterns of happy wedlock, shed no light on her outcast bed. Society damns, but cannot destroy, her. Shame and solitude are the wages which corrode her soul even more rapidly than her body, though that has become in Christian eyes, as the poet so finely says, "a blasphemy, brandished like a torch before God"; but man, denying her the status of any but an unconvicted criminal, forces her to drop lower and lower through remorse and infamy to the hospital-pallet or the assassin's knife.

How different is her fortune in Japan! There she wears scarlet, garish and bright as the five years' revelry to which, as they might sell a platter or a cup, her parents have sold her; but she is not doomed to the black degradation which robs her Western sister of self-respect. Though the loss of freedom be irksome and submission to buyers disagreeable, yet she is a member of "the oldest profession in the world," in a country where it is not without honour. She is surrounded by companions, well fed and well housed, protected from robbery or murder by the Government and the goddess Inari; above all, she does not live ashamed and boycotted, but plays her part in an active round of duties and ceremonies. If remembered precepts of religious teaching ever visit her, they come, not to threaten, but to console. So far from slipping hellwards, she is earning the approbation which Heaven

accords to filial self-sacrifice. Happy she is not, though she may one day become so, for, when her contract shall have expired, marriage will be no impossibility. But she is much less unhappy than if she wore black.

It might be thought that the operation of natural laws, regulating supply and demand, would sufficiently account for her existence. But those who prefer fancy to fact are given the choice between two legends. According to one, the Emperor Komatsu Tenno sent forth his eight daughters to be women of pleasure and set the fashion in seven provinces; from them the courtesans of Settsu, Hiogo, and Eguchi were said to be descended. Though one may doubt the authenticity of this imperial origin, the incongruity between rank and the exercise of the scarlet profession did not affect the Eastern mind, as it does our minds, with a sense of repulsion. On the contrary, it is no uncommon thing in the old romances to find a heroine of noble birth resorting, reluctantly indeed, but without any feeling of irremediable guilt, to the sale of her charms, until she should find a chance of regaining liberty and her lover. In fact, one of the classes into which courtesans were divided, that of *tsubone-jōro*, was so called from the word *tsubone*, signifying the ladies' apartments in a Daimyō's house, because the daughter of Ichinomiya, a Daimyō, being driven by stress of weather to Hiroshima and by want of money to sell her favours, became prototype and founder of aristocratic demireps. The country-folk, respecting her station, would not reckon her among common *joro*, but prefixed the substantive *tsubone* rather than blur their nice appreciation of class distinction. The second legend sounds less apocryphal. After the great sea-fight of Dan-no-ura

in 1185, the widows and daughters of the defeated Taira clan "were forced for daily bread to sell their bodies in the streets of Shimonoseki." But at least four centuries before that date the Hetaira had begun to set her mark on history and literature.

The poetry of the Nara period, which reflects the elegant court-culture of the eighth century and is represented by Manyōshiu ("The Collection of One Thousand Leaves"), was largely written by women, and contains at least one song by a "jūgyōjōfu," or "woman who goes about for pleasure." The *kugutsu*, who were summoned by innkeepers for the convenience of guests and were of much lower status, composed many famous little songs, whose memory has survived that of their authors. But the first light-o'-love whose orb burns brightly on the stormy darkness of the twelfth century, when Taira and Minamoto deluged the rice-fields with blood, was Tora Gozen. The most beautiful courtesan in Oiso, she became the mistress of the elder Soga, who slew his father's murderer in the hunting camp of the Shōgun Yoritomo at the foot of Fuji. Their tale is told in an historical novel, "Soga Monogatari," and the tourist who descends from the sulphur-springs of Ashinoyu to Lake Hakone will still pass on his way three monuments of stone, the smallest being commemorative of Tora. More striking still is the tribute paid to Takao, another type of immortal frailty, who refused with scorn the Lord of Sendai's offer to become his property. Endowed with every accomplishment, she enjoyed a higher social position than the geisha of those days, and regaining her freedom, was faithful (so far as professional exigencies would allow) to a lover of humble rank. Not only has her native hamlet of Shiogama erected a memorial-stone to

honour her dishonour, but the priests of the little Myō-onji temple jealously guard a faded fragment of her wardrobe. There was never great hostility in Japan between the goddess of love and more ascetic deities. In more than one locality you will find a row of temples fronted by a row of pleasure-houses, that the pilgrims may impartially indulge body and soul.

When the Ashikaga Shōguns made Kyōto a centre of nobler art and more delicate refinement, the Scarlet Lady lost ground. The curse of Confucius, stigmatising her sex, had crossed the Yellow Sea. Painters preferred the beauty of snow and tree and bird to her fatal beauty; poets, imbued with Buddhism, wrote passion-plays on other passions than hers. Neither in the serious *Nō* nor comical *Kiōgen* does she cut any figure at all. It would almost seem that for two centuries men found ceremonial tea-drinking and the excitements of civil war more congenial than her society.

At last the queen came by her own. When the feudal nobles went down before Iyeyasu and took his iron yoke upon their necks, the military despot was seen to be a popular liberator. Art and literature ceased to be the precious playthings of an æsthetic aristocracy. Novelists, playwrights, painters rose from the masses and worked for the masses. Rejecting in scorn the moony fetters of Chinese convention, they painted in broad colours and aimed at broad effects. Yedo, the new capital, without culture and without traditions, became their home and their hunting-ground. Of these turbulent subjects Venus Pandemos was naturally queen, and since her accession in the seventeenth century to the present day many measures

of restraint, more or less fruitless, have been adopted by scandalised authority to curb her sovereignty.

As for the novelists, three great names in Japanese fiction may be cited at once. Saikaku, who died at Osaka in 1693, wrote an enormous number of amusing stories and sketches of contemporary life. The rollicking life of the gay lupanars was his favourite theme. Mr. Aston assures us that "the very titles are too gross for quotation." Even his contemporaries were shocked, and a virulent criticism, entitled "Saikaku in Hell," brought about the suppression of his works by the Government. A new edition has lately been permitted to appear. In the next century his example was followed and bettered by Jishō, whose name signifies "Spontaneous Laughter." He was a Kyōto publisher, and his place of business, the Hachimonji-ya, or Figure Eight House, was as popular in its day with lovers of sex-novels as the Bodley Head itself. He had a collaborator, called Kesiki; and whether he supplied the humour and Kesiki the psychology I cannot say, but their joint productions aimed at something higher than Rabelaisian mirth. They aspired to the laurels of Theophrastus, delineating "Types of Elderly Men," "Types of Merchants' Assistants," "Types of Girlhood," and the like. But whatever the type selected, the reader was sure to pass most of his time with it in fast society. Well, Spontaneous Laughter died, but his firm continued to publish *share-bon*, or witty books, until the end of the eighteenth century, when once more the authorities swooped down and made an end. The fame of both these novelists is eclipsed by that of Kiōden (1761–1861), the father of the romantic novel. His predecessors had made men titter, but he bade them shudder or

weep, at the harlot's fate. He proved the sincerity of his sympathy with women of that class by marrying two of them in succession. They are said to have been excellent wives. At the age of thirty he was "condemned to fifty days' handcuffs (in his own house)," for circulating what he called an "Edifying Story-book." His subsequent stories were mostly founded on less dangerous themes.

If any should suppose that the writers of stories and plays on this subject had no other purpose than to supply unwholesome food for unclean appetites, he would be egregiously mistaken. The author of a witty book might indeed be liable to this imputation, though the *naïf* attitude of his fellow-countrymen to physical facts which it is our habit to ignore robs the pat epithet "pornographic" of much opprobrium. Still there were limits of propriety, which, in his zeal to amuse, he frequently left behind. But the dramatist had every justification for dramatising the Unfortunate Lady, who appealed most strongly to his imagination and his heart. To begin with, his audience loved a spectacle, and what spectacular setting could dazzle them more than the spacious Kuruwa with its balconied palaces, divided by cherry-trees and hung with showy lanterns? What other section of society could provide such a feast of colour for beauty-loving eyes as these priestesses of pleasure, when they moved in procession through thronging suitors in their gorgeous sweeping robes, or sat superbly immobile, like painted idols, their high *coiffures* haloed with radiating pins of pearl and silver and tortoise-shell? And beneath all that picturesque elegance throbbed a tragic, adventurous existence. Other women passed silently from father to husband, from mother to mother-in-law, their lives

arranged for them on lines of tranquil duty. But the Unfortunate Lady, transferred in girlhood, a chattel or a heroine, from village poverty to urban splendour, becoming half a queen and half a slave, was both free and not free to follow the voice of passion, which her secluded sisters had often never heard. They slept peacefully, with nothing to greatly hope or fear from the hand of destiny, but to her at any moment might come a Perseus, cleaving the dragon's mail with golden sword and delivering Andromeda from deadly servitude. Out of the hundreds of plays devoted to Andromeda, I will recall one, which has sunk most deeply into popular favour, and which I saw enacted before a weeping audience at the Kabuki-za theatre.

His name was not Perseus, but Gompachi, and he is supposed to have lived no more than two hundred and fifty years ago—the hero of this typical romance. He had the misfortune at the age of sixteen to kill one of his relations in a quarrel about a dog, and was obliged to flee for refuge to the capital. On his way to Yedo he was roused at midnight from his bed at a wayside inn by a beautiful girl, who warned him that a band of robbers, having stolen her from her parents, intended to slay him and steal his sword before daybreak. This was not Andromeda, but Komurasaki. As in duty bound, the gallant *samurai* cut down the whole band and restored their captive to her father, a wealthy merchant, who, for his part, asked nothing better than to marry his daughter to so dashing a youth. But this would have been against all precedent. For Andromeda to rescue Perseus and bestow on him the hand of a prospective heiress would have been to reverse the *rôles* in a most unbecoming manner.

Gompachi, therefore, setting ambition before love, pursued his way to Yedo. There he fell into dissolute habits, and, some years after, hearing much talk of a new beauty in Yoshiwara, discovered her to be no other than Komurasaki. Her family had fallen into dire poverty, and, to alleviate their sufferings, she had become an inmate of the huge metropolitan pleasure-house. This time Andromeda was in her proper place, the helpless victim of a ruthless monster, but to strike off her manacles a golden sword was needed, and this Perseus found it difficult to obtain. He took to robbery, which again involved murder, for his own fortune was far too meagre to allow of frequent meetings, far less of redeeming his sweetheart. At last he was caught and beheaded as a common malefactor, before he could compass his mission, and Komurasaki, accomplishing her own salvation, stabbed herself to death upon his tomb. If you should visit Meguro, about four miles west of Tōkyō, when the peonies are in bloom, you will have no trouble in ascertaining the position of their grave. It is called *Hiyoku-zuka* after the Hiyoku, "a fabulous double bird, which is an emblem of constancy in love."

Tragedies of this romantic character were very frequent in the Yedo period, though they generally ended in *shinju*, the simultaneous suicide of girl and guest, who thus hoped to enter on new life together. In fact, so frequent were they in the Genroku and Shōtoku eras (1688–1715), that the authorities tried to rob this death of attraction by cruel indignities to the dead. The bodies were exposed to view for three days on Nihon-bashi, hands and feet being tied together. Then the *Eta*, social pariahs, wrapped them in straw matting and cast them into a pit. It was

thought that after such a dog's burial their ghosts would not return to haunt the living, but it was customary to make their story into a song, which would become a nine days' pathos in Asakusa.

Not pathos but majesty is the dominating note of the Ukiyoye painters' homage to their Madonna. Easy to recognise by her distinctive garb—the tall *coiffure*, transfixed with branching pins, the reversed sash with satchel-like bow in front, the high clogs of black lacquer—she is by far the most familiar figure to Western eyes through the medium of plebeian art. Cheap colour-prints disseminated her image from Boston to Paris; enthusiasts gave eager eye to her hieratic grace. Utamaro, who openly lived in Yoshiwara, which he served with purse and brush, was the first to win French homage through De Goncourt's advocacy for his stately mistresses of preternatural height. Daintier and more human, but not less divine, the monochromatic ladies of Moronobu, the green-and-rose ladies of Kiyonobu, the sirens beloved of Kiyonaga, of Toyokuni, of Kunisada, followed one another round the world, encircling it with a Circean spell. Banish their portraits from the collector's gallery, and you leave it bare of three or four of the greatest names on the roll of Tōkyō artists. On the other hand, you will more easily defend the Japanolater's thesis, that part of the superiority of Japanese over Occidental art lies in its contempt for the "eternal feminine."

It was Iyeyasu, the great organiser, who made it part of the State's business to centralise and control sporadic vice in the capital. Before his time the "social evil," as it is called, was free to spread its virus where it might, to the hurt of private and public weal.

But one day, as the conqueror was returning from the battle of Sekigahara and taking his ease in the tea-house of Shoji Jinyemon, at Shinagawa, the proprietor, whose efforts to please were seconded by eight red-aproned waitresses of unusual beauty, so impressed the Shōgun with his talent for that kind of management, that he was appointed *nanushi*, or director-in-chief, of the Moto-Yoshiwara, founded in response to many petitions in 1618. Into this quarter, which either took its name from Yoshiwara, a town on the Tokaido famed for the prettiness of its daughters, or from its literal import, the "place of reeds," being situated in a marsh on the outskirts of Yedo, all the courtesans who had infested various portions of the city were gathered, licensed, and supervised. It at once became a little city in itself, wisely and usefully administered, and, being burnt down fifty years later, was replaced by the new or Shin-Yoshiwara, which remains in most essentials to this day a copy of its predecessor. It was divided into eight wards, each of which had responsible recorders, whose duty was to keep order, to guard against fires, and report suspicious characters to the police. Policemen stood at the gates, and every guest was required to enter his name in a register, though he might disguise it by changing the characters, if it were phonetically correct. At one time Christians and gamblers were forbidden to enter, while the *samurai*, or military retainer, whose Roman discipline excluded visits to Capua, was provided by the Amigasa tea-houses with a large braid hat to conceal his features. Espionage, as always under the Tokugawa *régime*, was a pronounced feature of this autonomous system, which was, and still is, of immense service in the detection of crime, since ill-gotten gains

were generally disbursed in that locality, affording clues to the identity of their possessor.

The organisation of each house, or *kashi-zashiki*, was elaborate and peculiar. The master, or *teishu*, though compelled to live on the premises, was seldom visible. His was the unseen hand which directed and received. He engaged at least three *wakaimono* (young fellows), supplied to him by a detective agency, of whom the *banto*, or clerk, made purchases and kept accounts; the *mise-ban*, or lady's attendant, walked behind her with open umbrella to avert sun or rain, when she passed in procession through the main street, Naka-no-cho; the *nikai-ma-washi*, or upper-storey man, looked to the lamps, the bedding, and other details of domestic comfort. Beside these were messengers, gardeners, bath-men, cooks, and night-watchman, who hailed the advent of each nocturnal hour with noisy wooden clappers. The staff of female assistants varied with the status of the house. If the girls belonged to the highest class, called *taiyu* or *oiran*, to each was allotted two child attendants, *kamuro*, whose dress must be of white bleached linen, decorated with a pine-tree pattern and crossed on the left shoulder by a black cape bearing in gold letters their mistress's name. When these little girls reached the age of fourteen, if their parents so wished it, they became *furisode shinzo*, or *shinzo* with flowing sleeves, and, without altogether ceasing to be attendants, began to learn the arts of singing, and arranging flowers and making tea. Yet a third class of servants bore the name of *banshin*. These were generally discharged *jōro*, who wore striped crape with a sash of black satin, and had the right to refuse admission to any whose respectability appeared

doubtful. But the most powerful and most unpopular person in the whole establishment was named *Yarité*, or Spear-Hand. She was responsible for the behaviour of all under her charge, and might administer corporal punishment. If a girl were summoned before the local justice, it was she who escorted her and answered the questions of the judge. Her room faced the top of the staircase, and none could pass to the inner chambers without propitiating the dragon on the threshold.

But to pass from the inner chambers to the world without the Yoshiwara was rarely permitted to such closely guarded prisoners. The prison might be known as the "House of the Myriad Flowers," or the "House of the Eight Banners," or the "House of the Ten Thousand Plums," but it was none the less a prison. Not one of its inmates, neither "Evening Mist," nor "Filmy Cloud," nor the "Face of Evening," could glide imperceptibly from its vigilant constraint. If her parents were dangerously ill and lived not too far away, a girl was sometimes allowed to visit them, being given a label, which she must return at sunset. If she were ill herself, she might consult a doctor outside the quarter; and all had the privilege of going in a party to Mukōjima in the season of cherry-blossom. But no other *exeat* was accorded. A runaway was invariably caught, and the expenses of capture were deducted from her subsequent earnings. At the age of twenty-five she was sure of regaining her liberty.

It must not be supposed that the five years' durance were years of unrelieved servitude. As month followed month, the monotony was broken by a round of kindly festivals. On New Year's Day the whole household was assembled by Spear-Hand to pay con-

ventional compliments to the master and mistress, who requited this courtesy with handsome presents. Every *jōro* received two dresses of silk crape; every *shinzo* two of pongee; every child attendant a dress of white linen with pine-tree pattern. Branches of pine and bamboo were suspended from the entrance, and above the lintels of the door-posts flamed a scarlet lobster. On each associated tea-house were bestowed *saké* cups of *kiri* wood, stamped with the donor's crest. At least three grand processions were held to celebrate the planting of the flowers. In April, when cherry-blossom was set before the tea-houses and along the main-street of Naka-no-cho, the balconies were crowded with spectators, the doorways hung with cherry-coloured curtains, as the stately line of magnificently-attired beauties with their attendant children and umbrella-bearers moved slowly on its way to the temple of Inari. In June, when iris was planted, the heavily-wadded dresses were laid aside, and lightly robed, like winged zephyrs, as though to personify their names, "White Cloud," and "A Thousand Springs," and "The Smell of the Plum Blossom" would pass with all their fanciful *cortège* through the sun-lit Place of Reeds.

> "It ver et Venus, et veris prænuntius ante
> Pennatus graditur Zephyrus, vestigia propter
> Flora quibus mater præspargens ante viaï
> Cuncta coloribus egregiis et odoribus opplet."

October brought chrysanthemum and signalised the close of summer. The imperial blossom soaked in *saké* was eaten on the ninth day; the big *hibachi* were lit; the human butterflies took a last flutter through the streets, their frail wings sheathed in velvet and brocade against the winter.

Other festivals, more intimate than these, assuaged the rigour of imprisonment. Though Inari had four temples in which to welcome her votaries, other divinities, too, offered distraction and consolation. When the evil spirits had been exorcised on the fourteenth day of the first month, the field was clear to garner divine favour. Ebisu, the jovial, pot-bellied god of good luck, claimed his meed of fish and *saké;* the sacred monkey-dance preceded the *fête* of Inari; Tanabata, the star of happy marriage, was warmly greeted with poems and fans and paper stars, which budded on bamboo branches fastened to the door; the feast of lanterns lasted a month, flooding the dark with radiance, but on the evening sacred to the memory of ancestors no guests were admitted, and the girls were free to hold communion with those parental dead whose exigence pressed so hardly on their flower-sweet heyday of life. Then O Tsuki San, the Lady Moon, must be "looked at" on three successive nights, while persimmon, rice dumplings, boiled beans, and chestnuts were set outside the house on tiny tripods, to catch her auspicious rays. On the occasion of the annual fire-incantation oranges were scattered about the garden and scrambled for by children, and three weeks before the year ended came the great cleaning, the preparation of rice-cakes and countless emblems for New Year's Day.

The observance of *oyaku*, when one of the little girls in waiting became a Shinzo with flowing sleeves, involved much expense for the *anejōro* to whose service she had been attached. First *ohaguro*, to blacken her teeth, was collected from seven friends; presents were made of buckwheat and red beans and rice to the tea-houses which they had visited together;

a row of cooking vessels, filled with steaming food, was covered with lengths of silk crape and damask outside the house, while indoors a table was set out with fans, tobacco-pouches, and embroidered towels for the geisha and servants. For three days, the newly promoted damsel would promenade the Naka-no-cho, wearing on the first day a long red cloak, on the second a purple cloak, on the third one of pale blue. The coiffure also varied from day to day, and the total expense of this ceremonious coming of age varied from twenty to forty pounds.

Occasionally it would happen that a guest fell in love with a girl and wished to marry her. Such a consummation was the object of many vows to Inari and the subject of many poems addressed to the Star of the Weaver at the festival of Tanabata. If he could raise the sum of 600 *ryo* (about £60), the rest was easy. Debts had to be paid, innumerable gifts conferred on patrons, companions, and attendants, of whom farewell was taken at a great feast on the day of departure. It requires much suffering and evil influence to uproot from the heart of any Japanese woman the flowers of gratitude and affection. If tradition may be credited, more than one suitor who anticipated Aubrey Tanqueray's experiment was rewarded for his courage with a happier fate. When the heavy black gate clanged behind her, happy indeed was the Scarlet Lady to put off her state-robes and become the obscure angel of a long-prayed-for benefactor. Sometimes she turned out badly. In that case the husband had the right to send her back, wearing a gown of penitential grey, to finish out her term in Yoshiwara.

## II

How much colour had been washed out of the foregoing picture by Western disapproval, filtering through merchants and missionaries, I was curious to learn. To their credit or discredit be it said, none of my Tōkyō friends cared to visit the Shin-Yoshiwara in the company of an alien. They were not exactly hindered by moral scruples, but rather by a disinclination to disclose the seamy side of their fellow countrymen to censorious eyes. They professed ignorance and changed the subject to railways or ironclads. However, one evening I met by chance the secretary of a famous lawyer-politician, who was taking a country cousin to see the sights of the capital; and, as he obligingly invited me to join the party, we made our way together through the maze of variety-shows and toy-shops which surround the Temple of Kwannon at Asakusa, until we reached the high embankment of Nihon-tsutsumi.

As we stood on the great dyke in a whirr of hurrying rickshaws, the country on the outer side stretched away into darkness, like the waste tracks which border the northern exterior boulevards of Paris. But at our feet, brilliant with light and clamorous with *samisens*, lay a clustering mass of lofty buildings, their roofs

adorned with wooden seven-pronged rakes, which I had seen so often in old prints and knew to be emblems of good luck, purchased in November by pious traders from the priests of the Temple of the Eagle.

We walked down the slope of Emonzaka (the hill of the collar), which perhaps took its name from the habit of the Tōkyō blood to adjust the *kimono* collar in careful folds at the moment of entry, and traversed Gojikken-machi, the street of fifty tea-houses leading to the ponderous gate, where two dapper policemen, neatly gloved and sworded, kept watch and ward. Now we are between handsome edifices, four storeys high, adorned with balconies and electric light, in the broad central Naka-no-cho, which three narrow turnings intersect on either side, containing shops of less imposing dimensions. The upper storeys tell no tales, though their paper-panelled shutters give twinkling and tinkling signs of revelry. On the ground-floor is an unbroken series of shop-windows, not fronted with plate-glass as in Piccadilly nor open to the street as in the Ginza, but palisaded with wooden bars from three to seven inches wide. And behind the bars, on silk or velvet cushions against a gaudy background of draped mirrors and ornamental woodwork, sit the wares — a row of powdered, painted, exquisitely upholstered victims. Most of them look happy enough, as they chatter or smoke or run laughing to the barrier to greet a passing acquaintance, but I know what heroic endurance is masked by a Japanese smile, and the sight of caged women turns me sick. Then I reflect that Western sentiment, however justified by inherited ethics, is scarcely the best auxiliary of fair judgment, so, striving to convert my conscience to a camera, I follow my companions

through the strange avenue of animated dolls. If they were really dolls of cunning fabrication, how much more readily could one inspect and appraise them! It seems that the most costly are reserved for their own compatriots. An English painter was, indeed, permitted to begin the portrait of one of these, but, when he came back to finish his work, admittance was refused. It was easy to believe that the inmates of the best houses were socially superior to the rest, for those whom I saw had gentle, refined faces, and did not raise their eyes from book or embroidery.

The least expensive dolls'-houses—they were of four grades—were decorated in execrable taste, and the Circes who cried or beckoned from their red-and-gilt dens had harsh voices and were of ungainly build. But between these extremes were some groups of prettily dressed exhibits, whose rich yet sober colouring harmonised admirably with the vision of whatever artist had been invited to decorate their show-room. There was the House of the Well of the Long Blooming Flowers, which should have been isolated for sheer loveliness from its flaunting neighbours. Behind the motionless houri, whose bright black tresses and mauve *kimono* were starred with white flowers, ran a riot of branch and blossom on wall and screen. Had Mohammed been Japanese, here was a tableau to win believers with the lure of a sensual paradise, but for the fact that, having realised so material a heaven on earth, the most inquisitive nation in the world would have demanded less familiar felicity. Beautiful, too, was the House of the Three Sea-shores, whose triple tide of waveless blue seemed silently advancing to reclaim the mermaid-daughters of Benten, who waited in such pathetic patience on the beach for a new

Urashima. My fancy was most taken by the House of the Dragon Cape, for the ancient ferocity of the saurian symbol, wrought in dusky bronze, not only fascinated with its boldness of coil and curve, but hovered with appropriate cruelty over the meek prisoners, coquettishly disguised. By the time we arrived at the lair of the Dragon I was thoroughly tired. We had been tramping and gazing for more than an hour at nearly two thousand replicas of the same figure, watching its movements and conjecturing its feelings. The cages were beginning to empty, as the more attractive centre-pieces found purchasers. I detected a certain impatience in my companions' bearing, and I was on the point of taking leave of them when the secretary suggested that, if I would like to enter the Dragon-house and take notes of the interior, he would explain my mission to the proprietor.

It was needful to release three damsels from the public gaze if we would ènter, and this we cheerfully did, bidding Young Bamboo, Golden Harp, and River of Song escape to their chambers. Then, leaving our shoes in charge of bowing attendants, we climbed to the first floor and began the evening with a mild tea-party. The Shinzo, in black dresses, brought in lacquer trays, on which were scarlet bowls containing eggs, fish, soup, and other delicacies. *Saké* flowed more copiously than tea. I was sorry to hear that the old-time processions were falling into disuse, and, though not yet abandoned entirely, were losing their antique splendour. The *taiyu*, too, was a thing of the past. The aureole of combs, the manifold robe over robe, the child attendants, had all gone. Varying now only in costume and accomplishment, all the women alike were cage-dwellers, whereas in former

days the superior classes of them were spared that indignity. So far from evading questions, the presiding representative of Spear-hand, an elderly woman with a not unkindly face, seemed amused by my interest and answered readily. I began to think we had made a mistake. This decorous tea-party, removed from the glare and hustle of the street, bore small resemblance to an orgy. But now and then wild incidents surged up in the low ripple of current gossip. Six months before a fire had broken out in Ageyamachi, consuming half an alley of too contiguous wooden dwellings and costing twenty lives. Recently a brawl between Russian sailors and Tōkyō students had fluttered all the dovecots of Sami Cho, but had been speedily quenched by the fearless dapper police.

A sound of thrumming from the floor above hinted that the next item on the programme would be musical. We mounted and found ourselves in presence of two geisha, Miss Wistaria and Miss Dolly, who had been summoned by my cicerone while I was interrogating the Shinzo. The status and performance of these geisha differ considerably from those of their more respectable sisters, and Europeans, by confusing the two, have no doubt helped to affix a stigma to the whole class. Miss Dolly was no more than a child, and Miss Wistaria looked about sixteen. Both songs and dances, without being vulgar, were decidedly lax; and, as the songs were topical, I followed them less easily than the dance, which might have been named after a primitive Japanese goddess, "The Female who Invites." Yet I must confess that the indelicacy was not blatant, but redeemed by a coy conscientiousness as of one who, half laughing, half shrinking, complies with an inevitable command.

After some forty minutes of minstrelsy (my companions joining in the songs), the entertainment concluded with a polite request to the "honourable stranger" to return, and, handing us their cards—dainty cardlets, one inch square, inscribed with tiny hieroglyphics—the performers returned to the tea-house whence they had been hired.

At this moment Young Bamboo, Golden Harp, and River of Song, whom I had completely forgotten, reappeared on the scene. They had changed their scarlet robes for looser ones of white satin, and awaited our pleasure. I explained to River of Song, whose intelligent expression had influenced my choice, that if she would tell me her story and describe her impressions of Yoshiwara life, her duties would be at an end and her fee doubled. Entering readily into the *rôle* of Scheherazadé, she began by declaring that, though eagerly awaiting the day of liberation, which was yet two years off, she was not so unhappy as many of her companions. At first, when the bell rang before the shrine at evening for a signal to enter the cage (*mise*, "the shop," she called it), the ordeal was both long and painful. But time had assuaged this feeling, and she had made many friends. Moreover, the Spear-hand of Dragon Cape had taken a fancy to her and made her life easier. Then she recalled her childhood. Her real name was Miss Mushroom (Matsutaké), and her father had been a fisherman of Shinagawa. Ever since she could remember, it had been her habit to patter bare-footed along the beach and gather shell-fish at low tide. But bad times drove her parents into Tōkyō, where an uncle had a small shop in the main street of Asakusa. On him they built their hopes, but his business failed, her mother died, and at last the

father, hoping to make a fresh start by capitalising his daughter, sold her to the house of the Dragon Cape. At this point I asked if I could see the *nenki-shomon*, or certificate of sale, which would probably be in the possession of Spear-hand. The River of Song hesitated, not liking to ask, but I volunteered to accompany her, and we finished the story in the actual sanctum of Spear-hand, whom I had propitiated with coins and cigarettes.

The document (except in the matter of names) was thus worded:

> *Name of Girl*—Ito Matsutaké.
> *Age*—Eighteen years.
> *Dwelling-place*—Asakusa, Daimachi 18.
> *Father's name*—Ito Nobuta.

You, Minami Kakichi, proprietor of the House of the Dragon Cape, agree to take into your employ for five years the above named at a price of:—

300 *yen* (about £30).
30 *yen* (about £3) you retain as *mizukin* (allowance for dress).
270 *yen* (about £27), the balance, I have received.

I guarantee that the girl will not cause you trouble while in your employ.

She is of the Monto sect, her temple being the Higashi Hongwanji in Asakusa.

> *Parent's name*—Ito Nobuta.
> *Witness's name*—Kimoto Nagao.
> *Landlord's name*—Yamada Isoh.
> *Proprietor's name*—Minami Kakichi.
> *Name of Kashi-zashiki*—House of the Dragon Cape.

It seemed to me that this certificate was story enough, with its batch of red seals denoting the triple sanction of father, master, and gods. Yet was it not better so? Hard as her fate might be, these were regular sponsors of a legal profession. She was not

living in lonely defiance of public opinion and private remorse. She would still be gentle, submissive, modest, until the lapse of time should restore her liberty, unless the rascaldom that would beset her pathway for five long years should coarsen and undo her natural goodness. The Japanese used to boast that they were born good; that only the Chinese, and such barbarians, require a code of prohibitive clauses defining and forbidding sin. It is a charming theory, and many foreigners have subscribed to it. It is certain that if you deduct from Yoshiwara the heinousness which Western moralists impute, a tangle of pros and cons would confuse the Japanese conservative who knows anything of Western wickedness. But, as I wavered to the sentimental side of Oriental legality, seduced by the condoning circumstances of politeness and security, I suddenly remembered that this city of pleasure was founded upon a marsh, for all night long the frogs, like thousands of sinister voices, sustained their croaking chorus, as if in ironic commentary on the

> "riddle that one shrinks
> To challenge from the scornful sphinx."

## III

WHENEVER Tōkyō crushed a hope or destroyed an illusion, I generally sought and sometimes found balm in Kyōto. There at least historic beauty is not marred and violated at every turn by modern innovation. The vulgar reality of the Shin-Yoshiwara had effectually dissipated my preconception of it, romantically based on book and picture. But, five months after the Asakusa frogs had mocked at my disillusion, I was urged by a Japanese artist to accompany him to Shimabara, about five miles out of Kyōto on the way to Lake Biwa, where, he said, some few vestiges were yet to be seen of the *oiran's* fading supremacy. Accordingly, having telephoned from the city to the village (impossible to avoid modernity!), which is happily omitted from the discreet pages of Murray, we drove out on a cold October evening to the once fashionable Tsumi-ya, a tea-house which figures in more than one notorious novel. As we sat shivering on the mats of the large fan-room, dimly lit by a single lamp, it was hard to realise what famous revels had contributed to its renown. Yet the relics were many and convincing. On the ceiling were painted the eight hundred and eighty-eight fans by Tosa, each inscribed with the autograph of a distinguished visitor,

a poet or a daimyō, generally both. Hard by was the pine-room, whose faintly pictured canopy of serpentine boughs was the work of Kōrin. And, when the servants entered to lay the preliminary meal, they wore the same red aprons and red sleeve-cords as in the days when Iyeyasu was borne in his litter to the gardens of Shoji Jinyemon.

It would seem that the routine of ambrosial nights does not greatly vary in the land of perpetual etiquette. Having sipped rather than supped, the dishes being light and fluid, we summoned the usual geisha, but among them, as the artist had forewarned me, was one of unusual distinction. O Wakatai San (her name was equivalent to "The Honourable Young Person") had long been the torture and despair of susceptible visitors. Her father was a *samurai*, strict and proud, who had trained her in a school of arbitrary virtue. Suitors had been one and all rejected; even Lord W., offering bribes of incredible amount, had gone empty away. She was losing her youth, having reached the age of twenty-three, but her regular features and sunny smile helped one to forget the rather raucous tones of her voice. She had seen enough of the Shimabara life to pity its victims, and sang us some rather sad ditties on the subject, of which I transcribe two. The first refers to the prisoner's longing for liberty.

A WISH.

Could I but live like
Butterflies flitting,
Settling together,
Free, on the moor!

The other is a little difficult to render, since each line has a double meaning: the point turns on the



The *Taiyu* waves her *saké*-cup.

punning elasticity of *mi*, a word signifying seed, self, and body. The flower to which allusion is made, a yellow rose that blooms in mountainous districts, is always known as the wanton's flower.

THE WANTON'S FLOWER.

The hill-girl's body
Is sold for silver:
Boor, seedless hill-rose,
A prison-flower!

Whatever novelists and dramatists may have written in glorification of the Scarlet Lady, the popular feeling, as voiced in vulgar songs, is pure compassion.

It was signified that on payment of a small sum we might now behold a resurrected *taiyu*, wearing the robes and insignia of her order. Assent being given, three blows were struck on a huge gong at the gate to summon the siren, who had never been subjected to the ignominious exposure of a cage, but came in state to meet her suitors at the Tsumi-ya. Alas! the state had been sadly curtailed! We saw no attendant henchmen, no ministering children, but three rosy-cheeked peasant-girls rather suddenly irradiated the gloom of that historic chamber, bearing without dignity the weight of a bygone royalty. The costumes were, in truth, splendid enough, and the crowns of heavy hairpins quite impressive. On the trailing robe of the first was represented a cloud cleft by lightning above a golden dragon; on that of the second, a rock with peonies; on that of the third, a tiger chasing a butterfly. All three designs were lavishly embroidered with gold. Sweeping her cumbrous skirt aside with one hand, the *taiyu* held in the other a wide *saké*-cup, which she slowly waved in air, repeating an old Japanese

formula, which neither the artist nor the red-aproned *nakauri* could interpret. For nearly five hundred years the room of fans had seen the *taiyu* wave her *saké*-cup, had heard her use those words, but we could not evoke from its shadowy depths the ghost of an explanation. We must take the spectacle for what it was, the pale survival and ineffectual remnant of dying custom. Somehow, the awkward mummery of the girls and the bleak discomfort of the old tea-house seemed strangely appropriate. It was as though we were fitly rewarded for copying Dr. Faustus' impious trick of calling up fair phantoms from the past, not realising that communion is impossible between living and dead. . . .

The Scarlet Lady has not yet lost her hold on new Japan. The "unruly wills and affections of sinful men" are too strong for that. But she has lost her glamour. Poets do not sing of her, painters withhold their homage, though she is represented by a barrister in the Lower House of the Diet. For now she has become a thing more sacrosanct than any vestal virgin —a vested interest. She is exploited by numerous joint-stock companies, in which shares are held by quite important people. Their aggregate capital is enormous, their ability to block all reform, which might tend to reduce profits, correspondingly great. The law is at once her protector and her gaoler. If invoked to check cruelty, it must also enforce the observance of contracts. All one can hope is that, so long as custom shall recognise and government control her, at least her outlook may not darken from red to black.

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